**Stones**

*When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua,****2****“Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man,****3****and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’”****4****Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe.****5****And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel,****6****that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’****7****then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”*

***8****And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the Lord told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. (Joshua 4:1-8, ESV)*

 God raises up stones in our life to keep our relationship with Him strong. Greetings dear brothers and sisters as we talk today about stones or monuments. A monument can be a stone or a statue that has a particular meaning. Every monument is a sign in itself. It reminds people of this war or that event in history. In the case of the Old Testament, the crossing of the Jordan River was an even worthy of a monument for various reasons. Today we’re going to talk about why we also put up stones or monuments in our lives, and about what they have to do with our life as a church in general.

 Being a child of God entails that we are going to remember His deeds as well as talk about them – and having monuments helps with those tasks. Now, Joshua had been given the leadership of God’s people after Moses had died by the God. He had conveyed God’s command about the memorial stones word for word among the people (which proved His faithfulness). The main purpose of this short passage, however, was not only to show Joshua’s obedience to God, but to provide the people with a way to participate further in God’s miracle of the crossing of the Jordan on dry ground. Crossing the river had a huge meaning for the Israelites: they would no longer be nomads, never having a place to call home. They would be free as a people group politically – and there would be a chance for God’s Will, which was for them to be a light unto the world, to develop. Now, even though this last thing didn’t happen, but from them did come the Savior of the world, Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord. Those memorial stones that they were going to place had a few purposes: first, they were to be a sign that the children of God would need to observe and understand. Second, they would need to learn the explanation of why the stones were there – and third, they needed to make sure the following generations would learn to observe and understand the signs.

 For example, today we had as part of our service the sacrament of baptism, which is a kind of monument itself. It is a review for the parents on the faith that they are devoted to, and the God that they are dedicating their child to. Also, baptism is for teaching – to teach the necessity to believe in the Triune Godhead (the Holy Trinity), and to make sure (if the one being baptized is a child) that the parents, who are the primary ones raising the child in faith these days, are able to train the child in the faith of Christ. In addition to reminding and teaching, the sacrament or monument of baptism is to be a driving force to obeying God for both parents and child.

 In other words, God has put memorial stones on our life journey before which we need to stop and ponder, such as baptism, marriage, funerals, communion, and other such events. They are there for us to remember God’s works and His character and identity.

 Finally, these signs or monuments need to be passed on by us to future generations, so that we don’t forget in whom we believe and how.

 Being a child of God entails that we are going to remember His deeds as well as talk about them – and having monuments helps with those tasks. God raises up stones in our life to keep our relationship with Him strong. May the Lord raise up those memorial stones before us, so that we remember Him and His works, and keep living a life that pleases Him.

 May the Lord bless us all, Amen.