**Joshua 4:4-8 Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; 5and Joshua said to them: “Cross over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, 6that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones *mean* to you?’ 7Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.” 8And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the Lord had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.**

Memorial Day – we celebrate this day in memory of those who died in active duty to our country. These men and women laid down their life for this country – WE are this country. It’s not someone, somewhere. We are this country and we are the ones who must answer – what do these stones mean to you?

In verse 4, Joshua is carrying out the command of God. God commanded that stones be taken from the midst of the Jordan – remember that the Jordan is divided, waters piled up, riverbed dry, priests standing, Israel preparing to cross. What a sight it must be! Can you see it with me? Verse 4 says *Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe.* These were 12 leaders, one from every tribe, called by Joshua, committed to the task. Willing to risk life – remember, the river, at flood stage, is piled up – if water suddenly released, they’d surely die.

Verse 5 *and Joshua said to them: “Cross over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel.* The men have been called, now they must take up the stone and cross. It’s one thing to commit to a ministry or task for God, it’s another to pick it up and follow through. Too many followers today never pick up the stone or calling on their life, never take up the cross and follow through for God. They listen, but they never hear.

Verse 6 *that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’* Two things here: The children will ask. Be prepared. Then, notice the question – what do these stones mean to **you**? What do the stones of fallen soldiers mean to you? Hotdogs and hamburgers, a grill in the backyard, a three day weekend? Sacrifice, love of country, duty, honor, fighting for my child to have a future, thankfulness, a willingness to defend what they died for? What does the stone that rolled away mean to you? Duty to God? Dedication to the Kingdom? Children ask – be prepared.

Verse 7 *Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”* These stones will be a memorial to the children forever. Talk about an opportunity! Daddy, Grandpa, Grandma, Mama, Aunt, Uncle – what do these stones mean to you? And you shall answer – they laid down their life for their fellow Americans, just as Jesus, the very Stone that the builders rejected, laid down His life for you. Greater love hath no man, no woman. What do these stones mean to me? They mean great love, sacrifice, and an opportunity to love as they loved… as Christ loved. What do these stones mean to you?

Verse 8 *And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the Lord had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.*They took up the stones and carried them, just as the Lord had spoken. They took up what they were called to take up and carried it faithfully. Will you take up the ministry that God is laying on your heart and carry it faithfully? When your child or grandchild or parent asks – why do you work so hard in ministry? – will you be able to tell him or her what that Stone that the builders rejected means to you?

Today and tomorrow, think about the question – what do these stones mean to you? What do the stones of the fallen mean to you? What does the stone rolled away mean to you? What does the Stone that the builders rejected mean to you? What does the church built on that very Stone mean to you? If you’ve never given your life to Jesus, then you don’t know what that Stone means to you… come today as we sing and let’s pray together that you may one day meet the Stone named Jesus Face to face and live in His presence forever.