***Joshua 4:8-9 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. 9 Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.***

Memorial Day – a day to remember those that died while serving our nation. More than 1 million have died for this country. Go to Arlington Cemetery, to Normandy Cemetery, to Lorraine Cemetery, to Manila Cemetery in the Philippines, and hundreds of cemeteries around this country and world and we’ll find Memorial Stones for American Soldiers, rows upon rows, acres upon acres of lives laid down that we might be free. May we always remember.

Israel is crossing the river Jordan. It’s flooding. The priests have stepped into the water, the water heaped up. We know, by the cities named in Joshua 3, that the waters backed up 20 miles – and stood in a heap. 2 million Jews went through on dry ground. Imagine the scene – Jericho nearby, water heaped up, people walking through the river, priests standing on the eastern edge – people passing into the Promised Land, led by a man whose name means God is Salvation. Hebrew tradition holds that the place of this crossing was a place called Bethabara. Bethabara means – House of Passage.

Interestingly in John 1:28 we find - *These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.* John the Baptist confronts the Pharisees at Bethabara, beyond the Jordan, on the eastern side. The next day, Jesus comes to be baptized, likely in Bethabara. Might it be that Jesus, God Himself, Salvation incarnate, is standing where Joshua once stood, and, just as Joshua led 2 million Jews through the Jordan from old to new life, so our Savior is baptized, making way for us to pass from old life to new life, from sin to Promised Land?

In our scripture, we have 24 stones. Verses 8 & 9 says *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. 9 Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.* 12 stones taken from the middle of the Jordan and 12 stones set up and left in the middle of the Jordan. Two sets of stones. One set on the western side in the Promised Land and one set on the Eastern side beneath the water. One set firmly in the Promises ahead and one set mired in the life left behind. One set representing the unredeemed and one set representing the people that trusted the promise. The children of Israel passed through the valley of the shadow of death, a wall of water to their right and a dry riverbed to their left. They trust that what is behind is to be left behind. They trust that the wall to their right will stay heaped up as they pass safely to the other side. They trust that what is ahead is good and that God has a destiny planned on the other side, that He has prepared that place for them, and He will keep His promises eternally.

Likewise, we Trust. The unredeemed stay behind, refuse to believe, refuse to make the crossing. We remember them. The redeemed move ahead, moving from old life to new life, leaving behind what Jesus tells us to leave behind. We move from lost to promise, from dead to alive, from enemy to adopted and adored.

It’s no coincidence if Jesus came to Bethabara to be baptized, no coincidence that John the Baptist was baptizing on the “other side of the Jordan”, no coincidence that the children of Israel, having wandered 40 years in the wilderness, crossed to the Promised Land led by a man whose name meant God is Salvation, and it is no coincidence that the incarnate God left Heaven, the true Promised Land, descended to earth, and having passed through the water of baptism, went for 40 days in the wilderness, to bring Eternal Salvation to those believing on His Name.

Memorial stones are important. Let us never forget the sacrifices of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, wives, and children. And let us never forget the sacrifice of our Savior who led us from that other shore to our new home, Promised by Emmanuel, God with us. Let Jesus be our Memorial Stone placed firmly in the Hope of our of Eternal Salvation.

In Luke 19:9-10, Jesus is with Zacchaeus - *And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Today, if you have never done so, I invite you to cross over, leave behind the old life and come believing in the new. Jesus is telling you to leave the stones of sin on the other side, come to Him for a firm foundation on the other side. Salvation is seeking. Our Lord is calling. Won’t you invite Him to your house today?