

*This week's Covenant Weekly Podcast is brought to you by a sponsor. Today's sponsor is our Covenant Property Spring Clean-up. Our Covenant Property Spring Clean-up is a morning, Saturday morning, May 27, when we get to work together to clean up our property. There is gravel that needs to be moved back onto our parking lot from the grass. There are hedges that need to be trimmed. I'm sure there are other things that need to be tackled, too. So this coming Saturday, bring your tools - spades and shovels, rakes and trimmers, wheelbarrows and trowels - and come help with the Covenant Property Spring Clean-up. We'll start at 8:30 am and go until around 11:30 unless we're done sooner. Coffee will be on and there will be donuts for our break time together. Come on out for some of that time or all of it as you are able. We look forward to getting our property back into better condition. And now back to our regularly scheduled Covenant Weekly Podcast.*

The day this podcast releases, Tuesday, May 23, I'll be participating in a convocation ceremony at McMaster Divinity College. I skipped my grade 13 commencement and my college graduation. But I promised my family that when I finished my Master's degree that I would go to the ceremony for it. Celebration of things doesn't come easily to me. I don't tend to be sentimental when it comes to marking occasions or accomplishments. I would say, however, that my engagement with scripture is challenging my tendency to simply move on after or goal has been reached or after God has done something amazing. Let's talk about that today on the Covenant Weekly Podcast Season 2 Episode 32 – Markers and Memorials.

### *Intro Music*

When considering the importance of markers and memorials, it seems that we need to think about the purpose of markers and memorials. In recent years, we've seen many markers and memorials taken down across Canada and especially in the southern United States. There were memorials set up with the purpose of honouring men whose legacies have not held up in the light of time. Those memorials range from names of universities, bronze statues in town squares, or names and banners in a baseball stadium. Memorials set up to honour men are tenuous at best.

That being said, they do serve a purpose. The primary reason is to prompt the telling of a story. Our family went to a BlueJays game not long ago and as we

sat way up in the stadium, we looked around at the names on the level of excellence and at the banners hung high in centre field. I remember all of the people and the events that have markers in the stadium and it led to conversations where I could recount the back-to-back World Series wins and tell my sons (again!) about how much fun it was to watch my favourite player growing up – Tony Fernandez with his smooth defence, scrappy hitting, and excellent baserunning. The true goal of markers and memorials is to remember and spark stories.

One-time events, when done well, can leave an indelible mark in our minds. Events that will come to mind later and prompt a reflective, “Remember when...” Memorials do much the same, but the stories are passed from those who were there to those who were not.

So why should we, the people of God, have memorials or stories that we rehearse? The best reason and one of the best examples is found in Joshua 4. In Joshua 4, Israel has just crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, much like had happened at the Red Sea. As they get across, but before the river begins to flow normally again, Joshua sends men from each of the tribes back into the water to grab large stones from the river bed – one for each tribe. Here is what they are for and why. Joshua says:

*We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future, your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 7 Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”*

He reiterates this at the end of the chapter when he says, again:

*“In the future, your children will ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 22 Then you can tell them, ‘This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the Lord your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. 24 He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the Lord’s hand is powerful, and so you might fear the Lord your God forever.”*

The purpose is to tell a story – a story about what God did to lead and provide for God’s people. The purpose of this is so that God’s people will be led to rehearse the story over and over again for generations.

But they didn’t just do this with physical memorials. They did it in their songs, too. The Psalms, the songbook of Israel *and* the church for millennia has a number of remembrance psalms. These are psalms that celebrate what God has done, but not in a generic way. They specifically retell or refer to the stories of their history in a way that would prompt a child to ask a parent or grandparent, “What is that about?”

Psalms 136 is a great example of this. This psalm is written in a way that leads the people of Israel to remember God’s hand in the creation of the world, the events by which they were freed from Egypt, and the events that led to their possession of the land of Canaan. It is a written and sung marker – an oral memorial stone – to remind them for generations of what God has done.

Here is a question I have for you. This is not a rhetorical one. I would love to have you respond to me by sending me a message at [jon@covenantchurch.ca](mailto:jon@covenantchurch.ca). What are some of the stories about what God has done among us that we should have a marker and memorial for? Our church is coming up on its 43rd anniversary. Many of the stories of God’s faithfulness among us haven’t been told to younger generations or those who are newer among us. It would be amazing to put something together where we could remember them. Perhaps, for some things, even set up markers to prompt the stories. But we need to hear the stories from those of you who lived through them.

This isn’t about pining for a past that is no longer here. It isn’t about going back. It is about reminding us about God’s faithfulness back then in order to encourage us toward the future. God has been faithful. There is much to remember, give thanks for, and celebrate. To paraphrase, John Newton, “‘Tis grace has brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.”

Considering this may prompt you to think about God’s faithfulness in your own lives...the stories that should be retold. I encourage you to write them down or record them in some way. Even if your kids don’t seem interested in them, perhaps your grandchildren will be!

In regards to Covenant, I look forward to hearing and reading those stories as you are able to share them!

*Announcement Music*

**Reminders for this week:**

- Saturday morning, May 27 at 8:30 am, we'll be meeting to do work at the church. One thing that may be able to get done, in addition to moving gravel and trimming shrubs, is a repair to the front retaining wall of the garden that has been broken for a while. If someone with those skills can be here, that would be amazing!
- We are working to get our summer schedule prepared so watch for that. We will not be live streaming for that time but hope you'll be able to participate in person as much as possible.
- We celebrate that our High School students had an amazing time this past weekend at the retreat. We are grateful for our leaders and for all the students who participated. Because of the retreat, there is *no* youth this coming Wednesday. The leaders will be getting a much-deserved breather.
- Please pray for the women who are participating in the Camp Kahquah women's retreat this coming weekend! For some, this will be the first time they will be participating in something like this. Pray that any nerves will be met with the Spirit's assurance and, again, that God would work in special ways in the lives of those who participate.

Before I go, I do want to thank you, Covenant Family, for your support of me and my family over the past number of years. While many of you likely didn't even know that I've been working on further schooling, your support of us is a large part of what has allowed me to pursue it. So, thank you. Your support of us during the eight years we've been here so far is one of the stories that I get to tell my sons...and that they have had the privilege of experiencing. I'm very grateful for it.

Peace to you as you move through this week. May you be blessed with more stories of God's faithfulness that you'll get to tell!

*Theme Music*