

JOSHUA 3: 1-17

ALL SAINTS' DAY

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN GET DIRTY FEET

Wasn't the choir fabulous? Love them – and LOVE that song.

There's a great old protest song called '*Sow Seeds Trust the Promise*'. Do you know it?

(Sing one verse - "God don't want no land elite...everybody get dirty feet")

That's a perfect combination of images for today. Land elite and dirty feet.

As we begin these conquest stories....and they ARE conquest stories....

We're going to return to the idea of land

(what does the idea of land have to do with the promise anyway? Review Abraham and Sarah- and in the end it's a question of God's faithfulness...does God keep promises or not?)

For today thought I want to stick to the dirty feet part. Are you willing to come along?

Read the text

What a great text – the language, the images....you just KNOW this stuff is better than history – it's poetry. It has layers and layers and LAYERS of meaning like the silt and the sand at the bottom of that river. Deep, and mysterious and teeming with life. I just LOVE this.

So: there they are: at the edge of the Jordan. THIS is the moment they've been waiting for, for 100s of years – every since God promised this land to ...who again??

The feet of the priests enter the water. They are bearing the ark of the covenant. They enter the water

And the waters stood still.

And the priests stay there until the entire nation has crossed over.

Get a snapshot of that moment in your mind.

Look at the river. At that time of year, we're told, it overflows its banks. The water had been rushing, now standing still in a single heap, it says.

Look at the people as they cross. Some of their faces look.....what? Some amazed, some with tears of joy flowing freely, some frightened....

Children squealing, frail people being helped across by your, strong arms....are YOU in there? What is your face saying in this snapshot – as you are there on the edge of this promise?

Now....look at the priests....the ones who bear with their own bodies the symbol of God's presence. There they are, feet covered with the mud from the bottom of the river

The moist and fertile bed of hope

They stand there, holding out the sign of God's presence

And they DO NOT MOVE FROM THAT POSTURE until everyone has crossed over.

What do their faces look like? Is it a joy for them? A duty to be endured? A privilege? A blessing? When the ark becomes heavy and the people cross slowly, what then?

Do their shoulders ache with the burden? Look around that picture one more time. Where are you?

Let me just offer this to you –

This is the eve of the day we call All Saints Day – when we hold up the priesthood of all believers. We've just celebrated Reformation. Try this on now: YOU are one of those priests....that's who we are together, you and I. We are the ones who hold up for others the sign of the presence of God. WE are those priests.

This world is poised on the brink...on the edge ofsomething. It feels as though we're about to cross over. Are we on the edge of a promise? That's up to us. But here we are on the edge, and the river is rushing,

We can stay back for fear of the torrent

Or we can take a step

What is required right now

Is people – priests – faithful ones...who will dare to step into the water

And when the waters part, stand in the mud

Proclaiming that even now God is with us

Stand there

Until everyone has crossed over and is safely in the promised land.

That's us.

The world is at the edge. It always is.

What is needed most, is people holding high and with their bodies and beings

Proclaiming that God is with us. And that the promise will not fail

And that it's not over until everyone – everyone – has crossed.

People ready to get dirty feet in the process.

So: how are your feet these days? Got them dirty lately? You know what I mean by that. Sure you do. It isn't always easy to step into the water or to stand there in the mud saying God is with us, insisting that we stay there until everyone is safe on the other side.

That's not easy and it doesn't win popularity contests. It's about taking hard stands when people are being left out. Those stands are taken individually and sometimes as churches or political issues....kids who stand up against bullies do that. They stand there, holding up a sign of the presence of God, even if those are not the words they use, but they're saying "EVERONE gets to cross over" and taking a burden on their own shoulders to make sure that's so. Sometimes there are consequences. As a church we've taken stands that have lost us members. And it goes on.

This is a perfect image for what we're called to do in the name of God. This is about taking a stand and taking consequences if there are any, it's about God's call to BE the ones who dare to take the first step and especially who refuse to head for the safety of the other shore until everyone is safely over

Nobody wins until we all win. Trite but true.

Somebody has to hold up the truth that on this planet we're all in it together. I can't be saved until we're all saved. Us and them is a dangerous outdated way to think

We're on the edge

And we'll cross

Or not cross

Together

And please God, let us be found in the mud, holding up the sign of your presence with us, saying we're not al one

And standing firm until everyone is over.

Amen.