FBC Remembrance Day Sunday • November 8, 2026

Where Are the Monuments?

Scripture: Joshua 4:1–7 (with Joshua 4:19–24)

Introduction — What Do These Stones Mean?

Across Canada, in cities, towns, and small communities, cenotaphs stand quietly among us. We pass them on our way to work, to the shops, or to church.

Most days there is little activity around them. But when Remembrance Day comes, people gather, heads are bowed, wreaths are laid, and names are remembered.

Those names represent more than dates on a stone. They represent sons and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours.

Behind every name was a life, a family, and a story. Many went away and never came home. Others returned carrying wounds that could not always be seen.

The bells of liberty ring in Canada today because of these men and women we honour.

The precious memory of their sacrifice will always live in our hearts, and we have a sacred trust to keep their memory alive.

We pause to give them our highest honours, humbly realizing the trust that these, our war dead, have handed to us.

The freedoms we enjoy, the freedoms we take so much for granted, were not won by the wealth of the ultra-rich, nor the genius of our scientists, but primarily by the blood, sweat and suffering of those who died that we might live free!

In past years I have shared with you how Remembrance Day turns my thoughts to the towering Knockagh War Memorial, standing high above Belfast Lough.

It's a striking landmark, and its very presence says to those who see it:

Do not forget. Do not forget those who served, those who suffered, and those who made sacrifices for others.

And yet a question troubles me. What happens when a monument remains standing, but the story behind it is no longer told?

What happens when the next generation sees the stone, but doesn't understand its meaning?

That question takes us directly to Joshua chapter 4.

Long before our cenotaphs and war memorials were erected, God commanded His people to build a memorial of stones. **Joshua chapter 4 tells us why**.

He told twelve men, one from each tribe, to pick up a heavy stone from the middle of the Jordan riverbed and pile them up on the dry shore.

For what reason? The Lord wanted to build a culture of remembrance.

1. Remember What God Has Done — Joshua 4:1–3

God said: *"In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' you are to tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord."* **Joshua 4:6–7**

From the rainbow given to Noah after the flood, to the rite of circumcision given to Abraham, to the annual feasts of Passover and the sacrificial system, God constantly gave His people physical touchpoints.

He did it because He knew a profound truth: **selective memory is our default setting.**

Notice the brilliance of how the Lord designs memory. He used a pile of ordinary, heavy river stones. **Why?**

Because when future generations would walk past the banks of the Jordan and see twelve massive stones piled high where stones didn't belong, they would stop, tilt their heads, and ask a vital question: *What do these stones mean?*

Biblical faith is designed to be intergenerational and conversational.

But why stones? Because people forget. The Lord did not want this generation to receive His mercy and then lose the memory of it. He wanted a visible reminder of His power, His promises, and His faithfulness.

The stones were not meant to honour Israel's greatness. **They were meant to bear witness to God's greatness**. They would remind the people it was the Lord that had brought them through.

The crossing of Jordan was a work of God.

We too have reason to remember.

When as a nation we actively pause to remember, something profound shifts within us. Looking back at our history doesn't just dredge up nostalgia, it anchors our present.

If we don't build visible markers of God's faithfulness to us, or how God brought us through our own "Jordan rivers," our children will grow up assuming our faith is just an outdated tradition rather than a living reality. **Quote "whose we are"**

When we remember the hard-fought battles and immense cost of our national freedoms, it compels us to guard those freedoms and honour those who sacrificed for them.

But through them we can learn to say, *"Thus far has the LORD helped us"*

2. Remember Why the Memorial Stands Joshua 4:4–7

Joshua did exactly what the Lord commanded.

Twelve men took up twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Then Joshua explained their purpose: *"That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What do these stones mean?"* (verse 6).

That is the question at the heart of this message: **What do these stones mean?**

The stones themselves could not speak. Someone had to tell the story. **A child would point and ask, "Why are those stones there?"**

And a parent would answer, "Let me tell you what the Lord did for us at the Jordan." The monument was meant to begin a conversation, not end one.

That is true of our war memorials as well. A cenotaph is not merely a place for a wreath once a year.

It asks us to tell the story of sacrifice, courage, grief, and the terrible cost of war.

We must not allow Remembrance Day to become only a familiar ceremony. The silence matters. The names matter. The stories matter.

And the responsibility to tell those stories belongs to us.

But Joshua 4 also raises a spiritual question. **What are we passing on about the Lord?**

Do our children and grandchildren know only that we attended church, or do they know why we trusted Christ?

Have we told them of answered prayers, of forgiveness received, of the sustaining grace of God?

Our faith cannot be inherited simply by living near a church or by seeing a Bible on a shelf. The next generation needs to hear what God has done, what His Word teaches, and why Jesus Christ matters to us.

One of the most meaningful things we can do is sit down with a younger person and say, "Let me tell you why I believe. Let me tell you what the Lord has done for me."

That testimony may outlast many things we leave behind.

3. Remember the Greatest Sacrifice — The Cross of Christ

There is another memorial that Christians cannot overlook.

Last Sunday at the Lord's Table, we heard the words of Jesus*: "This do in remembrance of me"* (Luke 22:19). The bread and cup directed our hearts to His body given and His blood shed for us.

Today we honour men and women who gave their lives in the service of their country. **We do so with grateful hearts.**

But when we turn to Calvary, we speak of a sacrifice unlike any other.

Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, willingly gave Himself for sinners. His death was not simply an example of courage; it was the saving work through which God offers forgiveness and reconciliation to the human race.

Jesus said, *"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13).

We rightly hear in those words an expression of sacrificial love.

Yet the gospel takes us further still: "*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"*

The Cross reminds us of the seriousness of sin, the depth of God's love, and the price of our redemption.

The empty tomb tells us that death did not have the final word. **The risen Christ gives hope that no stone memorial, however precious, can give.**

The cenotaph reminds us of freedoms preserved at great human cost; **the cross** reminds us of the grace of God that sets sinners free by the sacrifice of Jesus.

So when we ask, "**Where are the monuments?"** the Christian answer is not merely to point to a building or a cross on a wall. We point to the crucified and risen Lord, and we tell what He has done.

4. Remember — and Tell the Next Generation — Joshua 4:21–24

Later in Joshua 4, the question that was asked in verse 6, is asked again in verse 21 to show how important it was. "*What do these stones mean?"*

Joshua tells the people to explain that the Lord dried up the waters of the Jordan until they crossed over.

And then he gives the larger purpose: *"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"* **verse 24**

The memorial was not intended to keep Israel looking backward forever.

Remembering the past was to shape how they lived in the present and how they trusted God in the future.

And that's our challenge this Remembrance Day Sunday.

The miracle at the Jordan wasn't just for Israel's comfort; **it was a public declaration.** The past is tied to the present, so that a watching world can look at the Lord's people and see the mighty hand of God.

This brings us right back to our theme on this Remembrance Sunday.

When we gather to honour those who sacrificed for our civil freedoms, we declare that freedom has a tremendous cost.

When we gather as the church to remember the cross, the empty tomb, and God's grace, we declare to a watching world that our salvation has a Saviour.

Our monuments, —whether they are a cross on a steeple, a baptismal tank, a tattered family Bible, or a poppy worn on a lapel, are not meant to trap us in nostalgia.

They are signposts pointing everyone around us to the God who does miracles, who keeps His promises, and who invites every generation into His unshakeable grace.

Let's commit, as a church family, to building our lives on the firm foundation of God's Word, setting up our stones of remembrance so that we never forget the grace that brought us safe thus far.

One day our grandchildren may ask us, "Why do you worship? Why does the Cross mean so much to you?"

May we be ready to say, "Because the transforming saving grace of Jesus is real. Because the Lord has been faithful, and because Jesus Christ has given me hope."

Conclusion — Do Not Let the Stones Fall Silent

Wyn and I drove up to the Knockagh Monument just over a year ago. What an incredible view there is standing beside that old war memorial monument.

Cenotaphs still stand in our Canadian communities. Their presence calls us to honour lives and sacrifices that must not be forgotten.

And on the banks of the Jordan, twelve stones once stood as a testimony that God had made a way for His people.

The question those stones raised remains important: "*What do these stones mean?"* **We must not let the monuments become silent.**

Tell the stories of those who served. Teach the young why we remember. Give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy, and never take lightly the suffering through which they were preserved.

But let us also tell the greater story of God's mercy.

There are some things we must never forget. We must never forget the sacrifice of those who served. And above all, we must never forget the love of God demonstrated at the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As with grateful hearts today we honour those who have fallen, whose blood cries out from battlefields around the world, **"Remember this day,"** so too Jesus Christ comes to us, holding His nail pierced hands and saying, **"Remember Me"**

Today, with humble and grateful hearts, we remember.

We remember the fallen. We remember the cost of freedom. And when the next generation asks, "*What do these stones mean?"* may we be ready to answer.

"That all the people of the earth might know the LORD's hand, that it is mighty."

Prayer:

Lord, help us to build stones of remembrance in our daily lives.

Give us open doors to share the story of Your mercy with our children and grandchildren when they ask and make our lives a living witness to a world that desperately needs Your hope.

Anchor our hearts in Your truth this week. May the grace that brought us safe thus far be the light that leads us home.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen.