

Joshua 6

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[0 : 0 0] comes from the book of Joshua chapter 6. Please stand for the reading of God's word. Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua, see, I have given Jericho into your hand with its kings and mighty men of valor. You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus you shall do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark. On the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him. So Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests and said to them, take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

And he said to the people, go forward, march around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord. And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of the ram's horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them. The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets and the rear guard was walking after the ark while the trumpets blew continually.

But Joshua commanded the people, you shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth until the day I tell you to shout, then you shall shout. So he caused the ark of the Lord to circle the city going about at once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. Then Joshua rose early in the morning and the priests took up the ark of the Lord and the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark of the Lord walked on and they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the Lord while the trumpets blew continually. And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did for six days. On the seventh day, they rose early at the dawn of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times.

It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, shout for the Lord has given you the city. And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.

Only Rahab, the prostitute, and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers whom we sent. But you keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction. Lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. But all silver and gold and every vessel of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord. So the people shouted and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout and the wall fell down flat so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. Then they devoted all the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, donkeys with the edge of the sword. But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her as you swore to her. So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belong to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. And they burned the city with fire and everything in it. Only the silver and gold and the vessels of bronze and of iron they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. But Rahab, the prostitute, and her father's household and all who belong to her,

[4 : 02] Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. Joshua laid an oath on them at that time saying, cursed before the Lord be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates. So the Lord was with Joshua and his fame was in all the land. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Father, we thank you for this day that you have made. We rejoice even in the rain for you are the God of the sunshine and the rain. Speak now to your people.

Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight. Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. We give you all praise and all glory in your son's name we do pray. Amen. Amen. And amen.

Once upon a time in a land far, far away there stood a city called Jericho.

Now this city was an evil city and it stood in the way of Joshua and his people from possessing this promised land that was flowing with milk and honey.

[6 : 02] Sounds like the makings of a great Bible story. In fact, for many in this room, including myself, this is how we may have first heard about Joshua and Jericho in a bedtime Bible story that was read to us.

Now, I'll be transparent. The challenge in preparing this sermon with such a familiar text is the tendency to simply want to recount the Bible story, perhaps with dramatic effect and risk missing the meaning of the passage altogether.

I mean, for those of you who may not be familiar with the story of Joshua and the battle of Jericho, it is perhaps the most recognized and well-known story in this entire book of Joshua.

It's filled with all the intrigue, excitement, action, and drama of any blockbuster motion picture.

However, today's text is not some mere cute, quaint Bible story.

The true impact and message in this narrative can be measured in this one undeniable fact, which also we'll tag our sermon with this morning.

[7 : 33] God is a promise keeping God with the power to deliver his people. God is a promise keeping God with the power to deliver his people.

God was back in the church I grew up in, we'd just say he's able. Whatever the issue, whatever the problem, whatever the struggle, there's nothing God can't do, he's able.

But then further as we walk through this passage, the question is not just about God's ability to do it, but the faith required to believe it.

Where is your faith today? Now let's quickly review the history that got us here to this point in our passage this morning.

Canaan was the promised land to Abraham well over 400 years ago. Then after Israel's release from captivity in Egypt, the subsequent 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the death of Moses, the change of leadership, we come to Joshua, who was finally to lead the people into the promised land.

[8 : 56] If you've been following the previous messages in this series from pastors Helm and me, you see that chapters 1 through 5 are really about the preparation of Joshua and the people for the promised land.

Joshua and Israel's commissioning in chapter 1, the spies into Jericho and the promise to Rahab in chapter 2, crossing the Jordan and the 12 memorial stones in chapters 3 and 4, and the renewal of covenant via circumcision and the observance of Passover we heard about last week in chapter 5. We shift now as we come to chapter 6 where the first of several actual conflicts take place that are necessary to actually possess the land and it all starts with the conquering of the city of Jericho.

Now the first two introductory verses of our text really set the scene. Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel.

None went out and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua, see, I have given Jericho into your hand with its king and mighty men of valor.

[10 : 21] Now Jericho wasn't an exceptionally large city, but it was an important and formidable fortress city. And they had obviously received intel that an attack from Israel was imminent.

Chapter 2 tells us they were nervous, they were scared. So the city was on full alert with everything shut down, locked down, nobody coming in or going out, turning the city with its massive walls into a veritable fortified bunker that would be very difficult to penetrate.

Then the Lord comes with the ultimate movie spoiler. valor. He says this to Joshua, see, I've given Jericho into your hand with its king and mighty men of valor.

No cliffhanger here. No need to come back for season two. The Lord just told you how all of this was going to end.

Can you see Joshua? Wait a minute, Lord. You must not be seeing what I'm seeing. I see a walled in, locked down, fortified city.

[11 : 44] And somehow you see victory. This, my friends, is where faith first kicks in. Faith embraces the promise of victory before the victory.

Faith sees over the wall, through the wall, beyond the wall, while acknowledging the very wall that it sees. That's faith. First John chapter 5 verse 4 says, for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Now, the meat of this passage really breaks down into three areas.

I'd like you to consider with me this morning. First, orders given, orders obeyed. Secondly, is that seventh day victory, and then last, faith walk lessons for us today.

Now, I grew up in a military home, and I learned early on about the importance of orders and the requirement to follow them to the letter.

[13 : 05] I mean, to quote one of my favorite movies, A Few Good Men, we follow orders, son. We follow orders, or people die.

It's that simple. However, starting here in verse three of this passage, we see God lay out this completely out-of-the-box, unorthodox battle plan for victory.

Surely, we're not expected to follow that. But here in the succeeding verses, we will watch how by faith in obedience, Joshua and the people of Israel walk out those plans.

Let's look more closely at the plan itself. You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once, thus shall you do for six days.

Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark. On the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

[14 : 08] And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.

Now, I'm no military strategist, but it seems to me this would not be the best way to conquer a walled, fortified city.

Come on, you've watched the movies of armies taking over forts. Where's the battering ram that would go through the walls? Where are the catapults that shoot the boulders of fire over the wall? Where are the big ladders that are constructed to lean up against the wall so the army can scale the wall and get to the top? Those sound like real military strategies.

Well, those are cool human plans, but these are divine battle plans. These are holy strategies. These plans are filled with divine purpose.

[15 : 15] These plans are designed so that at the end you'll have no choice but to trust God and to say that he did it.

You don't know why God is doing what he's doing, but your job is to follow the plan. You don't know how God is going to get it done, but your job is to follow the plan.

I know what you're going through right now might seem crazy, but keep following the plan. The challenges you might be experiencing on your job are difficult, but keep following the plan.

Why would anybody in their right mind move from Florida to Chicago? Wait, I'm sorry. That was just for me and Nico. That shouldn't even be in the sermon.

Forgive me. That was just, but keep following the plan. For if you have the faith to follow the plan, he has the power to make your Jericho fall.

[16 : 26] Starting in verse 6, by faith, that's exactly what we see Joshua do. He calls together the priests and the people and begins to outline to them this crazy plan God has given him.

First, he says, take up the Ark of the Covenant. Now, the Ark of the Covenant was a sacred box that contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's staff, and a jar of manna, but most importantly, it represented the presence of God.

God's presence would be, needed to be, right there with them as they executed this divine plan. tell you, it's a dangerous thing to strike out on your own without God's presence being with you.

Secondly, he sets the formation. There are armed guards in front, followed by seven priests bearing seven trumpets who were to be blowing their trumpets continuously, followed by those carrying the Ark of the Covenant, followed by a rear-armed guard, and then everyone else.

Now, let's just take a moment and talk about the trumpets. Trumpets are easily the most referenced instrument in the Bible. And if you know me, there's no way we could just pass by the significance of these instruments.

[17 : 54] Trumpets could signify an alarm of war, call to a symbol or a command to march.

Trumpets were used to help win conflicts, as in Gideon in the 300 in Judges chapter 7, or to help bring walls down, as here in our text.

Trumpets were used regularly in the act of worship. John, in his vision, saw seven angels with seven trumpets standing before God in Revelation chapter 8.

But here's the exciting part. Jesus Christ himself is coming back with a trumpet, and the dead in Christ are going to get up with the sound of the trumpet.

Let the music play. Hallelujah. Then comes the duration of this plan. They were to march around the city once a day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day.

Now, there seemed to be a lot of sevens in this plan. Seven priests with seven trumpets marching a total of seven days, and then the seven times on the seventh day.

[19 : 06] Why the sevenths? Well, most likely seven, this number of divine completion, would harken back to creation in Genesis chapter 2.

God creates the heavens and the earth in six days, and then the seventh day he declares it finished and rested. Could this seven-day plan mark on one hand God's divine fulfillment of them entering into the promised land, promised hundreds of years ago, and then on the other hand mark something brand new, almost a new Eden where the very church itself was being recreated, and we see manifested the picture of believers entering into his rest, as outlined in Hebrews chapter four. that rest, by the way, is still and ultimately will forever be available to us today. Now, starting in verse 8 through 14, they start out to execute God's plan.

Let me take just a brief pause right here to go back and mark, however, all the faith responses from Joshua and the people up to this point. It's important that we don't lose this thread of faith as we move further in the text.

First, Joshua's faith to believe the promise of a victory not yet won. Secondly, Joshua's faith to not only buy into God's plan, but then to take God's out-of-the-box plan back to the priest and the people.

[20 : 48] Thirdly, upon hearing the plan, we see here the people's faith to obey. and start moving. So they start out in verse 8 to execute the plan.

And then in verse 10, Joshua gives them more instruction. But Joshua commanded the people, you shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth until the day I tell you to shout.

Then you shall shout. though this passage doesn't specifically tell us, we do have some clues as to why Joshua might have given this instruction.

Joshua probably remembers being with Moses back at the Red Sea back in Exodus chapter 14 and hearing Moses tell the people, fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today.

For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you and you have only to be silent.

[21 : 57] Sometimes you can prematurely terminate God's plan by simply talking too much.

Everybody's got a thought. Everybody's got an opinion. Everybody's got a comment. Everybody's got a better way, better path, better plan. Come on, parents, you're familiar with this.

You give your child instructions to do or not to do something, and what follows is this litany of questions, challenges, and commentary about the instructions you've just given.

That then prompts you as a parent, at least in my house, to respond ever so eloquently with these four words. What did I say?

Let me give you the pace translation on that. I don't owe you an explanation for anything. You're the child, I'm the parent, and as such, the wise course of action would be for you to do as I've instructed.

[23 : 04] Next time you're inclined to grumble or complain about the path God has you on, before you have your say, take a moment and remember, what did God say?

Joshua wanted them to be still and know that he is God, Psalm 46. They then through verse 13, 14, went about obediently carrying out God's plan, once a day, for the next six days.

Now, the curtain rises on the climactic seventh day. Starting at verse 15, the text says, on the seventh day, they rose early at the dawn of day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times.

It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priest had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, shout, for the Lord has given you the city.

And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

[24 : 22] But you keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction.

and bring trouble upon it. But all the silver and gold and every vessel of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord.

Man, so before they can shout, Joshua gives a powerful statement full of a whole additional set of important directions.

First, Joshua tells them, it's time to shout because the Lord has given them the city. There goes that faith talking again. Though it hasn't quite happened yet, I know it will happen.

There's a classic gospel song based on this that says, don't wait till the battle is over. Shout now. You know in the end you're going to win.

[25 : 27] I promise as soon as we put the choir together, we'll sing it right here. how do you know you're going to win? Because God is a promise keeping God with the power to deliver his people.

And I believe by faith he will do it. I remember being in high school, needing a hundred dollars for something I wanted to do at school and I went to my dad for this money and for whatever reason, my dad said no.

So I did what kids do and I went to my not so secret weapon, my mother. My mother then said the most amazing thing to me, almost like here in our text, she said, go to bed and you'll have it in the morning.

Well, that's all I needed. I had such faith in my mother's words that even though I didn't have it yet, I knew it was mine.

I went to my room, started jotting down all the things I was going to get with this money, laid out my I'm going to spend some money clothes for the next day and I went to bed.

[26 : 53] I woke up the next morning and sure enough, there was \$100 sitting on my dressing. I ran to my mom, thanked her and said in amazement, mom, how did you do this?

My mother responded, quoting Isaiah, my ways are not your ways, son. You'll understand all of this when you get older.

if I could have that kind of faith in my mother, what about the almighty God, creator of the universe? Where is your faith? Secondly, he tells them that the city and all that's in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.

well, now this is the elephant in the room, so to speak, that we have to deal with before we can move forward. I realize that portions of texts like this can be morally troubling for some.

[28 : 05] And I know the questions. Is the God of love, grace, mercy, justice, commanding, genocide? And is he commissioning his people to vengefully wipe out another nation?

Why would this good God send his people to go and take land that belonged to somebody else? Is this an example of people using religion to justify violence and conquest?

Well, quite the contrary. Though we may not have all the answers, we must keep in mind that the Bible tells one unified story.

And that story is about God's mission to restore his rebellious creation and bring all of humanity back to himself through Jesus Christ.

These battles have context and they're all a part of the great history of the story of redemption. Here's what we do know.

[29 : 10] As the unique people of God, the exploits of Israel were not her own doing, but God's. God was their commander-in-chief. He gave all the orders and he himself fought for them.

Secondly, the destruction of the nations of Canaan was not just about making some place for Israel, and certainly not because Israel had done anything of themselves to deserve it.

Israel was the instrument by which God accomplished his historical judgments on the wickedness and sin of those nations. In fact, Moses told the people this directly in Deuteronomy chapter 9.

Do not say in your heart, after the Lord has gone and thrust them out before you, it is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land.

Whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God is driving them out before you.

[30 : 27] And that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. These battles were not simply one tribe using violence to displace another and then using God's name.

Rather, they were a part of God's plan to cleanse the land of evil practices and push back dark spiritual powers. Leviticus and Deuteronomy list in great detail the wickedness of the Canaanites, including the worship of demons, other perversions, and even the sacrifice of children.

Though these conquests may express God's judgment of sin, they also show us a few other things.

First, God didn't just impulsively on a whim move to wipe out Canaan.

He was patient in dealing with them for over 400 years, until they reached the point of no return.

Secondly, this wasn't genocide, because this merciful God still allowed Canaanites like Rahab and her family to be saved.

It's outlined in the second part of verse 17. Rahab, in fact, was later held up as an example of faithful obedience in the New Testament, and even included in the bloodline of Jesus Christ himself.

[31 : 53] Moreover, the Israelites themselves can testify to God's impartiality as God let them wander in the wilderness for 40 years, while an entire generation died because of disobedience.

There's obviously no economic incentive here for Israel, because as you see in verses 18 and 19, Joshua told the people that all the silver and gold belong to the Lord, and were to go into his treasury.

Lastly, and most importantly, this conquest and judgment of sin doesn't represent some divide between Old and New Testaments, but rather all of this text points to Jesus Christ.

God, through Joshua and the people of Israel, bought victory at the expense of his enemies' blood, but Jesus Christ bought victory for his enemies, including you and I, through the shedding of his own blood.

The wages of sin is still death, and one day judgment is coming for all of us, but thanks be to God, who sent his own son to pay that debt for us on the cross, so none of us should have to perish if we believe on him.

[33 : 15] John 3, 16. Just like Rahab and her family in this text, God is still saving, God is still delivering, and if you just turn to him and trust him, there's still room at the cross for you.

Now we arrive to the apex of the story, verse 20. So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat.

first, or to quote that Negro spiritual you just heard Andrew play, the walls came tumbling down, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.

You all just missed a great place to get excited and to shout. Everything that happens prior to verse 20 doesn't mean anything if the walls don't fall.

That promise of victory God gave to Joshua in advance doesn't mean anything if the walls don't fall. That totally unorthodox, out-of-the-box plan Joshua had to tell his people would be crazy if the walls don't fall.

[34 : 38] Thirteen times in seven days, marching around a walled-up, fortified city makes no sense if the walls don't fall.

fall. But hallelujah, the walls did fall. And because they did, we know for a certainty that God is a promise-keeping God with the power to deliver his people.

And here's the great part. Because God kept his promise then, God will keep his promises now. and every promise of God's that's written in this book, he will keep.

In verses 21 through 25, we see the people carrying out the rest of Joshua's instructions, including delivering Rahab and all her family, another promise kept, putting the silver and gold in the Lord's treasury and the ultimate destruction of the city.

Then in verse 26, Joshua pronounces a curse on any man who rises up to rebuild Jericho.

[35 : 51] A curse we actually see come to pass later on in 1 Kings chapter 16. What could the lesson be here? Well, maybe don't go back and try to rebuild what God has delivered you from.

Proverbs 26, verse 11 graphically describes it this way. Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.

If God has brought you out, stay out. And don't go back. Finally, in verse 27, because of Joshua's faith and obedience, the Lord was with Joshua and his fame was in all the land.

1 Peter chapter 5, verse 6 says, humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time, he may exalt you.

So what does all of this mean for us today? Well, in closing, ultimately through this text, we now know God keeps his promises and has the power to bring down Jericho.

[37 : 12] Not just yesterday's Jericho in this text, but today's Jericho in your life. Whatever that is for you, now by faith through Jesus Christ, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

And the he that is in you will never leave you or forsake you and is able to bring the walls down. But the question is, do you have the faith to believe?

Do you then also have the faith to obey? Do you have the faith to step out on what God has promised you knowing that he's able?

Do you have the faith to know that your salvation and victory has already been secured through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, which we will mark here at the table in just a moment?

In the great faith chapter of Hebrews chapter 11, our text is mentioned in verses 30 and 31. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

[38 : 29] By faith, Rahab, the prostitute, did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Where is your faith in the promise-keeping God with the power to deliver? Fortify your faith and watch the walls come down.

Father, we thank you for being a promise-keeping God with all power. You are sovereign. You know everything. And you see the end from the very beginning.

God, increase our faith this morning that we may follow you and obey you. We place every wall in our life, every Jericho in our life at your feet because we know that you're able.

Thank you for being such a good God who never leaves us or forsakes us. It's all in your son's name we pray. Amen. Amen.

[39 : 45]