

THE BATTLE OF JERICHO
JOSHUA 5.13-6.21

I want to start with this neat little story this morning.

Grace Church on the Mount was built in 1973 on top of Kingtown Mountain at the foothills of the Great Smokys' in New Jersey.

Ten days before the new church was to open the Roxbury Planning Board informed them that they would not grant permanent residence to the church until there was a sufficient number of parking spaces.

The problem, there was literally a mountain to move. There was actually a mountain where those parking lots would be. The cost of moving the mountain...well, that would be another mountain to move.

Undaunted Pastor Roy Campbell reminded his congregation that they could stand on the promises of God because in Matthew 17.20 (MSG), **“Jesus says, ‘...The simple truth is that if you had a mere kernel of faith, a poppy seed, say, you would tell this mountain, ‘Move!’ and it would move.**

Well, guess what?
The next day the telephone company called.
They said they were going to build a new building.
They said the new building was to be in a swampy area close to the church.
They said they needed some fill for the swampy area.
And they asked, if they could use the dirt from the church's mountain for the fill.

Over the next month the phone company hauled away 40,000 square yards of dirt. They prepared the lots for paving and paid the church over \$25,000 for the dirt.

A mountain had been moved, at least part of a mountain...enough of a mountain.

Isn't that an encouraging story?
That should encourage any of us when we feel hopeless and helpless,
when it is hopeless and we are helpless,
when it is not only improbable, but impossible
when we need to move mountains, take down walls, break barriers,
shatter strongholds, and overcome the obstacles that prevent us

from believing God's promises of being who God wants us to be,
doing what God wants us to do, and having what God wants us to have.

Our passage today invites us to trust God as well, to stand on the promises of God. The Israelites did. They didn't have to move a mountain, but they had to conquer a city, a well fortified city and to do that, they had to take down the walls, unscaleable, unshakeable, unconquerable walls.

Forty years earlier in faith Moses raised his staff and parted his hands
and God did the impossible, he lowered his hands and parted the water.

But despite this awesome display of God's power,
the Israelites, poised on the boundary of the promised land,
lacked confidence in God's protection and provision.

They lacked the faith.
So, to learn the faith, they were sentenced
to 40 years of detention wandering in the wilderness.

Then the time had come to see if the faith they lacked, they'd learned, and would now live.
They were given their new mission and marching orders,
and those were to claim and conquer the promised land.

They were poised at the entrance of the promised land.
They were reminded at least three times not to be afraid but to be strong and courageous.

First, flowing in their way, flowing fast and furious at flood stage was the Jordan River.
God invited their priests to step into the deep and descending water.
Then God put his hand into the water
and the water stopped, and the people walked across.

Now safely across, they found standing in their way,
not a mountain but the great and ungodly city of Jericho.

The people worshiped a pagan moon god
and lived lives immoral beyond imagination,
well I guess today nothing is left to the imagination.

Jericho had between 10,000-20,000 people., a little bit smaller than the city of Aberdeen.
Jericho was located five miles west of the Jordan, sitting at the foot of the western hills of Canaan.

This was a very strategic location in controlling the area and thus Jericho was well fortified.
Actually the city had state of the art defense,
unparallel to any other city and built to withstand any invasion.

There were two towering walls 30-60 feet high.
The inner wall was 12 feet thick, the outer 6 feet thick with 15 feet of road between them.

Also two huge gates stood at the entrance.
They were reinforced with iron and basically impossible to penetrate.

The mission itself was impossible.
It could have been codenamed, "foolish"
because it seemed foolish to send men armed with sticks and stones
against such a fortified city and such a formidable army.

But to conquer the land, they had to conquer the city.
To take the Promised Land, they had to take out Jericho.
How could they possibly do that?

Here is what the Bible says, Hebrews 11:30,
“By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.”

Let’s read their story and see what we can learn about this faith.

The first thing we need to learn is **“GOD IS THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH.”**
Joshua was no stranger to God and there is no doubt God was the object of Joshua’s faith.
Verses 13-15, **“Now when Joshua was near Jericho,
he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand.
Joshua went up to him and asked, Are you for us or for our enemies?”**

**““Neither, he replied, but as the commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’
Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him,
‘What message does my Lord have for his servant?’**

**The commander of the Lord’s army replied, Take off your sandals,
for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”**

Remember Joshua has visited with the Lord before.
His life started as a slave of Pharaoh but his great love was to serve the Lord.
He had opportunities for forty years to experience firsthand and witness
God’s provision and protection.

He had been trained and taught the things of God.
He chatted with God often in prayer.
He was a soldier who would fight the good fight, starting on his knees.
He has no problem knowing or acknowledging his faith in God.

If you’re like me, we don’t have a difficult time acknowledging our faith in God.
But living it, now that is another matter.

We are bombarded in the movies, class mottos, or popular slogans
bestselling self-help books, and from most inspirational speakers,
that you should “Just have faith, you can do it.”
“All you have to do is believe in yourself.”
or “The most important thing is, to believe in yourself.”

Ask someone who’s had a terrible addiction. They’ve been to hell and back.
Most understand and will testify that their escape was providential,
that there was something that was beyond themselves,
that there was a higher power at work bringing about their escape.

Let's remember the words of Jesus, John 16.33

**"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world."**

On the other hand when we don't make ourselves the object of our faith,
we make someone else or something else the object of our faith.

The pastor was encouraging a member of the church to tithe.

The member said, "I just don't think I can, I have enough trouble paying my bills."

The pastor replied, "John, I promise to pay the difference of any unpaid bills
if you would just try tithing for a month.

John thought about it and agreed.

The pastor then said, "John I think it is amazing that you would trust me,
a man with mere means before you would trust the owner of the universe."

But there is no question about it, for Joshua and the Israelites, God was the object of their faith.
Their mantra, Joshua 24.15, "for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord."

So who or what is really the object of your faith?

Besides making God the object of our faith,
the second thing we need to learn is that **"FAITH REQUIRES OBEDIENCE."**

Here is what Joshua was told, Joshua 6.2-5,

"Then the Lord said to Joshua,

'See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with the king and its fighting men.

March around the city once with all the armed men.

Do this for six days. (That would give the fine citizens of Jericho six days to repent)

Have the seven priests carry trumpets of rams horns in front of the ark.

**On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priest blowing the trumpets.
When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout;
then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in."**

Did you catch that, "everyman straight in?"

Excavation of Jericho has shown that the walls did collapse down and in,

And that every man could enter straight in from where he was standing outside the walls.

But let's go back and talk about the strategy.

How crazy is that, to march around the best fortified city,

holding the finest troops of the time in circles blowing trumpets.

How about a banging the door with a battering ram, trying a catapult,
or shooting some fiery arrows at the tower?

We've all seen enough movies to know you could at least try those things first.

Guess not- just walk around the city, toot your trumpet, and when I tell you to shout, give a big shout.

Guess what? Joshua and the Israelites did what God told them to do and it worked.

God asked Joshua to see with the eyes of faith.
Verse 2, "Then the Lord said to Joshua, '**See**, I have delivered Jericho into your hands...'"

See here means to see the big picture, to see more than the eye can see.
It means to see through the eyes of God, see with eyes of faith,
and so Joshua saw beyond the walls of Jericho.

Basically see and then act accordingly.
The Israelites did, they marched and blew on the trumpets.
Those were trumpets being used yes, as part of the military strategy
but **first and foremost** in and as worship,
offering sounds of praise and thanksgiving to God for the victory all ready won.

That's a fascinating thing isn't it?
We see that formula for victory again with King Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20.

Jehoshaphat was under attack against overwhelming odds.
He "inquired of the Lord," called the people together, and proclaimed a fast.

The Spirit lead prophet, Jahaziel appeared and had these words for Jehoshaphat,
Verse 15, "**Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army.
For the battle is the not yours, but God's.**"

And again in verse 17, "**Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.
God out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.**"

Anyway the next day the people worship and Jehoshaphat prays.
Jehoshaphat gives the troops the pre-game talk
saying something about guess what? Having faith in God.

Then he appoints a choir to be dressed in holy robes to march ahead of the troops singing,
"**Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever.**" (verse 21) and guess what-they win.

Imagine sending a choir into the streets of Bagdad
or into the hills of Afghanistan singing, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever."

That should be our battle song all the time because the Christian life isn't just hard, it's impossible.
God must be the object of our faith and we must have an obedient faith.

Another great example of obedience is Rahab, who was a part of this story anyway.
Verse 25 tells us,
"**But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute,
with her family and all who belonged to her ,
Because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho...**"

Achan on the other hand wasn't obedient and ...
Opps, Pastor Eldon is going to tell you that part of the story next week.

Just one more thing about this faith business, at least one more thing
and that we learn from this passage is that **"FAITH IS AN ONGOING PROCESS."**
Waiting time is not wasting time, especially in the economy of God.

Isaiah 40.31 reminds us that,
**"those who hope in the Lord, (wait upon the Lord) will renew their strength.
Then we'll soar on wings like eagles."**

Waiting can mean working while we wait.
It can also be worshipping while we wait.

Waiting time is not wasting time, especially in the economy of God.

Sometimes it's just a matter of being patient, trusting the process, the ongoing process.
The Israelites did.

Think about this, verse 14,
**"so on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to camp.
They did this for six days.
On the seventh day they got up at daybreak and
marched around the city seven times in the same manner,
except on that day they circled the city seven times."**

To march around the city once each day would probably take at least two hours
And on the seventh day...think about it,
you are talking about going around in circles, (I do that a lot anyway)
but with trumpets blaring and no talking for what about 10-15 hours that day?

I don't know about you but my legs would ache, my cloths get dusty, my body grow tired.
And when my body grows tired, my patience wear thin, and my faith wane.

Waiting time is not wasting time in the economy of God.

If we could only remember what the Israelites learned,
that faith is ongoing, that faith requires obedience, and that God is the object of our faith
then we can seek first the kingdom of God, see with the eyes of faith,
and stand on the promises of God.

That is a great idea and a good song to sing isn't it? Let's stand and sing Standing on the Promises.