

5th Sunday after Pentecost
29th May 2016

Biggest Brunch for Cancer Council

Come to Jesus

Welcome & Song
Blessed Be Your Name

Table Prayer

"First Course" of the Meal

Grow in His Grace

Scriptures: Joshua 5:13 - 6:23

Kid's Stuff

Brief Sharing on the Scripture

"Second Course" of the Meal

Discussion & Table Sharing on the
Scripture

Whole Group Sharing

Offering: ***It is Well with My Soul***

Prayers:

The Lord's Supper - shared around
the meal tables

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth
as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin
against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, & the
glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Song - (New Song) ***Reckless Love***

Go in His Power

Blessing

Song - ***We Are Marching
in the Light of God***

Dessert & Clean up!

Show His Love

Joshua 5:13-6:23

5:13 13 When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up & saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him & demanded, "Are you friend or foe?" 14 "Neither one," he replied. "I am the commander of the Lord's army."

At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?" 15 The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did as he was told.

6 Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. 2 But the Lord said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, & all its strong warriors. 3 You & your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. 4 Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. 5 When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse & the people can charge straight into the town."

6:1 So Joshua called together the priests & said, "Take up the Ark of the Lord's Covenant, & assign seven priests to walk in front of it, each carrying a ram's horn." 7 Then he gave orders to the people: "March around the town, & the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the Lord."

8 After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the rams' horns started marching in the presence of the Lord, blowing the horns as they marched. The Ark of the Lord's Covenant followed behind them. 9 Some of the armed men marched in front of the priests with the horns & some behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns. 10 "Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!" 11 So the Ark of the Lord was carried around the town once that day, & then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp.

12 Joshua got up early the next morning, & the priests again carried the Ark of the Lord. 13 The seven priests with the rams' horns marched in front of the Ark of the Lord, blowing their horns. Again the armed men marched both in front of the priests with the horns & behind the Ark of the Lord. All this time the priests were blowing their horns. 14 On the second day they

again marched around the town once & returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.

15 On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn & marched around the town as they had done before.

But this time they went around the town seven times.

16 The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the town!

17 Jericho & everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute & the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

18 "Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, & you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. 19 Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the Lord & must be brought into his treasury."

20 When the people heard the sound of the rams' horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, & the Israelites charged straight into the town & captured it. 21 They completely destroyed everything in it with their swords—men & women, young & old, cattle, sheep, goats, & donkeys.

22 Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house & bring her out, along with all her family."

23 The men who had been spies went in & brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, & all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

GUIDED SHARING

What are the 1st things that jump out at you from that account?

Jericho was a "gateway fortress" to the land God had promised. Any invading enemy would have to deal with the great walled city of Jericho. You could not simply bypass it. Jericho was too large/strong to be ignored.

What was Jericho to Joshua/people of God?

- A city of pagan unbelief.
- A city of strategic importance.
- A city of human impossibility.

All three are crucial. Pagan belief & corrupt Canaanite religion with its emphasis on idolatry/immorality could never coexist with the true worship of God. It must be confronted/defeated. Would forever be an issue with Israel. So the city had spiritual importance as well as military importance.

Jericho's battlements: 2 sets of walls. Outer wall about 2 meters thick & archaeologists suggest 8-10m high. Inner wall about 3-4 meters wide & 12-15m high. In between a 4-5m "killing zone" – flat packed rock walkway. Layered defense is a great military strategy.

The angelic encounter

Who was the man in Joshua 5:13-15? What do you think his presence indicates? What about his statement to Joshua? - That's where that part of the narrative ends... Meaning? Does that matter?

Now read further...What has the king/army of Jericho done to secure their city? How assured are they of their safety...even though we are told they are afraid of God's people? Joshua 2:8-9

How do you attack that? Heb. 11:30 - *It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, & the walls came crashing down.*

God's military strategy:

- March around the town once a day for 6 days (v. 3).
- March with the Ark of the Covenant (v. 4).
- Put seven priests in front of the Ark (v. 4).
- 7th day march around Jericho 7 times (v. 5).
- Priests blow rams' horns while marching (v. 5).
- 7th time around on the 7th day, have the people shout & the walls will come down (v. 5).
- When the walls come down, enter the city & conquer it (v. 5).
- People are silent while marching.
- Soldiers surround the Ark...but the Ark leads

Has God ever asked/lead you to do something that didn't at first make sense?

6:2 But the Lord said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors."

Past perfect tense of the verb...God speaks as if the walls are already down & the battle over because from God's perspective it is. Notice where the Ark is...Right out front right in the midst of the battle right in the face of the people so they can see God at work on their behalf. This is not about the strength of Israel's army but the faithfulness of God.

Remember 3 weeks ago we explored how God enables us to live from his promises because they are already ours. All that's left from here on in is for Joshua to live from that promise which means he has to live persistent persevering faith. For some reason, God has ordered the universe that when we live responsive to his direct word to us trusting in his promises (his capacity to do precisely what he has promised) **we Receive what we could not otherwise have CONCEIVED.** Eph 3:20 Zech 4:6 Not by strength or by might but by my Spirit says the Lord

AT THE SAME TIME... God's promises do not equal inactivity. Look again as we go through Joshua 6:6ff...

- Preparation (vv. 6-7).
- Discipline (v. 10).
- Patience & repetition (v. 14).
- Absolute obedience (v. 20-21).
- Integrity in keeping promises (vv. 23-25)

Seriously... God could have said, "Sit tight. I've got this." God is fully able to work with or without human means. Think about Luther's understanding of parts of the Lord's Prayer... But God's typical M.O. is to use people to accomplish his purposes. So even though God caused the walls to fall down, the people still had to march, they still had to blow trumpets, they still had to shout, & when the walls fell down, they still had to take the city, fighting door to door.

Faith receives that promise/assurance & lives from it.

Put yourself in that crowd... When Joshua lays out the battle plan, what are you thinking? When you're marching quietly while the priests are blowing their horn on Day 1... when nothing happens... Day 2... Day 3... Day 7 when you figure "OK... time to shout"? When the walls come crashing down?

What is faith?

Heb 11:1 – "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

I once heard someone say "Genuine faith is believing while doubting but acting on the believing part." Belief is simply the confidence that certain things are true. "This chair will keep my 94 kilo butt up off the floor." Chairs are supposed to do that. This one looks pretty trustworthy... I think I can sit here safely. But 100% certainty is darn near rare in this life especially about the hard calls. How do we as a family deal with _____? \$\$, sick parents, troubled child, unemployment, chronic illness... Late at night you lie awake tossing & turning, first going one way & then another.

That's reality. You don't have 100% certainty & you don't know of any way to get 100% certainty. You think so, you hope so, you pray for guidance, you seek counsel, you write it all down, you wait for a lightning bolt from heaven but sometimes you don't get that.

It took faith (believing while doubting) to march around Jericho for six days, & then 7 times on the 7th day. God told them the walls would fall down, but they still had to do the marching & then they still had to do the conquering. That's "acting on the believing part."

Living by faith means acting on the belief part. It means taking a step of faith, however small, however halting, however unsure of yourself you may be... and then doing it again & again & again & again...

You see... the real battle was not with the inhabitant of Jericho but in the hearts of God's people. The real struggle is always "right here." The real question is always, "Am I going to trust God to be good to his word, true to his promise & then live like his intentions are for my good & his plans include me?"

The real struggle is always "right here."

Joshua 3:9ff... it isn't until the water is up over their sandals that the water stops flowing & backs upstream...

1 Kings 17:8ff... make me a little cake of bread first...

Abraham has to leave his country Moses has to go back to his country David has to fight a giant

Paul has to go back to people he once tried to kill with a completely different message

2 Chron 20:10ff – 3 armies invade this land that God has given his people... 3 vs 1 – v12 – "O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help." – God says, put the choir in front of the battle array & have them sing... then watch what I do.

On the way Jehoshaphat stopped & said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah & Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, & you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, & you will succeed." 21 After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord & praising him for his holy splendour. This is what they sang:

"Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!"

22 At the very moment they began to sing & give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, & Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. 23 The armies of Moab & Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir & killed every one of them. After they had destroyed the army of Seir, they began attacking each other. 24 So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped.

Faith is always an active trust that God is good & seeks to bring that good to us & through us – that God is who he says he is & will do what he says he will do – that we are who God says we are – that we can do all things according to the power of Christ in us – that God's word is alive & active in us.

The coach says "Do it again." The whole team groans, but you run that drill again...that set play...you set up the in-bounds pass again...and again...and again.

The music teacher says "Do it again" and no matter how many times you've played that piece of music, run those scales, played those arpeggios...you do it again...and again...and again.

The school teacher sets homework...math, spelling, reading, science problems...& you do them again & again & again...

Why...because practice makes permanent...no not perfect... Permanent. Practice makes permanent. And when God calls you to do something again/again/again...even something that feels strange...you do it because you know that when God moves his kingdom forward, he uses unexpected people doing unexpected things to bring about an impossible victory. When God advances his reign it always looks like a losing effort...His One & Only Son on the cross looked like a sure losing proposition...but when Jesus was raised from the dead death was forever defeated, sin forever forgiven & evil forever crushed by Christ's victory.

God wants your life to be part of his on-going victory & his revelation of love & grace and his unceasing abundant joy & peace. Would you do something radical so that love grace joy & peace could come to you again and again and again? In a minute...God asks us to trust that his promise through Christ is true for us...that his death/resurrection are also ours...do we trust/believe that...

Friedrich Nietzsche said: The essential thing 'in heaven & earth' is . . . that there should be long obedience in the same direction; that thereby results, & has always resulted in the long run, in something which has made life worth living.

Sometimes you just have to keep going...you just have to put one foot in front of the other because that is all you know how to do.

God instructed his people to march around the walls of the city of Jericho for 6 days blowing their trumpets...so they marched & blew. On the 7th day they were told to march again & blow their trumpets one last time & shout as loud as they could & the city walls would crumble before them & their conquest of the land God had promised them would begin. So they did. Their daily obedience in the same direction yielded exactly what God promised. The walls fell. The town was theirs. God was again faithful to his word & committed to his promises for them.

His faithfulness and trustworthiness hasn't faltered or waived at all. Higher than the heavens is his love for you. Stronger than death is his desire to have you as part of God's family & heir of his kingdom.

Like those marching around Jericho's walls, because of God's promise of life in Christ with him forever, we can Fear nothing & trust God for everything. Because we are his we have nothing to fear & can live courageously and obediently because God always keeps his promises

Any other observations/questions...