

## WELCOME 8 July 2018 – 7 Pentecost '18 B

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you all here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea...you know that's going to be awesome.

Here's a word for you...BHAG – ever heard of that? It's an acronym for Big Hairy Audacious Goal...Jim Collins & Jerry Porras coined the term in their book *Built to Last* to describe a single goal/single purpose that helps an organization focus on something that to outsiders would seem impossible but which instills belief & momentum within the organization. It's a way businesses thrive from year to year to year over the long run...corporate strat planning tool  
Today we're going to learn a word even Collins/Porras couldn't have dreamed up: BHAP...you guessed it Big Hairy Audacious Prayer...like this one:

*On the day the Lord gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the Lord in front of all the people of Israel. He said,*

*“Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, & the moon over the valley of Aijalon.”*

*So the sun stood still & the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies.*

What I can't even imagine...God can perform for his purposes & his glory

God still encourages his people to pray like that...Big Hairy Audacious Prayers... Prayers that to a not-yet-believer would seem ridiculous, but which God honours because they are courageous & rely on his promises for their foundation & his strength for their completion. They're prayers of enormous faith & deep trust which is assured that God will do **FOR** you all he has promised and do **IN** you more than you could imagine. So today...Pray Big Pray Bold...

We'll explore & experience that today...

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Mighty God, to you belong the mysteries of the universe. You transform shepherds into kings, the smallest seeds into magnificent trees, and hardened hearts into loving ones.*

*Bless us with your life-giving Spirit, re-create us in your image, and shape us to your purposes. Multiply our gifts to serve and transform your world. You are the Giver of all life and all things good...receive our thanks & use our lives. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

## 7 PENTECOST '18 B – COURAGEOUS FAITH: PRAY BIG PRAY BOLD

JOSHUA 10:1-14

### FAITH CHAT:

1. If there was a day in your life that could have lasted 48 hours, what day would that be?
2. What is the most daring courageous prayer you have ever prayed? What happened? **BIBLES**

It would not surprise you to know that I often get asked to pray for stuff. I think it's called a "job related hazard requirement" that as a pastor I get asked to pray for any number of things...in all sorts of circumstances. I am usually happy to do so. I love standing alongside someone & laying a joy or a concern before the Father knowing he will work his good will in that situation & give to us his Holy Spirit for our encouragement irrespective of the outcome of our prayer...yes...no...wait.

But sometimes...I will field a prayer request & 1 of 2 thoughts hits my heart. 1) You don't need me to pray for that. You are just as equipped as I am. I'm happy to pray over dinner at your house, but as head of the household, I trust you can do that as well as I. My being a pastor equips me no better to pray for potatoes than you. I do not have the inside track to the Almighty just because I spent too many years in sem. I'm happy to pray, but in some cases you can as well or better than I can.

2) Whose will are we talking about here? Sometimes someone will ask me to pray for something & I sense that what they're after is getting God to see things their way rather than the other way around. Years ago I had a grandmother pull me aside to tell me she wanted me to pray for her granddaughter. I had just seen the young lady 2 days before. Is something wrong? Yes! She has a horrible boyfriend. Really? He seems a nice enough fella...reminds me a lot of her dad. That's the problem. So it's not uncommon for me to ask...Am I praying here for your will to be done or God's will to be done? It matters. Remember I grew up in the era where Janis Joplin made fun of Christian praying...

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz?

My friends all drive Porsches, I must make amends.

Worked hard all my lifetime, no help from my friends,

So Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz?

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the town?

I'm counting on you, Lord, please don't let me down.

Prove that you love me and buy the next round,

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the town? *Whose will are we talking about here?*

I know I've told you I grew up just down the street from a big ol' AoG church where every Summer they had a week-long tent revival. Set the big canvas tent right in their gravel car park & covered the gravel with about 2" of sawdust & somewhere in there they'd bring in somebody who'd get really rollin' w/ what we use to call "name-it-&-claim-it" praying...You'd come up the front & ask him to pray for anything & if you could name it you could claim it in the Holy Spirit. I don't know how many folks I saw name/claim a healing they never received or a job that never happened or...that Mercedes Benz...

So when it comes to prayer...I have always lived in that tension between *James 4:2 You do not have because you do not ask God.* & *James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.* As a result, in many ways...I have at times lived w/ an anemic prayer life. Oh I pray & God does awesome things in response...But I am convinced I am far too timid in my conversations with the Father – far too small in my view of what God can do or wants to do through me with respect to the things I pray about. I'm probably not alone...but Joshua has been a big part of helping me get bigger & bolder in my praying.

Just to give a sense of where we are going...I firmly believe these 2 things: 1<sup>st</sup> – God wants us to pray into the fullness of his blessings for us. God wants us to pray/ask for all of the wonderful gifts he has pledged – all of the amazing/awesome things he has promised. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Receiving that fullness will require faith in action on our part. As God keeps his promises in answer to our prayers we will be called to risk something personally – sacrifice something personally – lay ourselves on the line to see God's good plans for us fulfilled. **BIBLES** 6<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of that book

Catch up with the narrative: God has rescued his people from Egypt & under Moses' leadership led them to the front door of the land God has promised them since Abe. But they get scared of what they need to do to claim this land from its inhabitants & because of their unfaith that whole generation must wander in the desert & die distant from their promised inheritance. God will not force you to accept his gifts... When they will not trust/obey...they die apart from the promise.

40 years later Joshua wears the mantle of leadership because he & Caleb were the only 2 ready to do whatever God called for to receive the land God promised. God holds back the flooding Jordan River so they can cross over. They march around the city of Jericho as God directed & as the priests blow their trumpets & the people shout God levels the walls of the city & they conquer it. God later says, "Take the city of Ai" & the land begins to fall under their ownership in accord with God's promises.

Now...is this process smooth & trouble-free? No...even Joshua makes mistakes & acts on his own outside of God's direction. He is tricked into a treaty with a tribe of Gibeonites. So when they come under attack Joshua lives true to his word & masses his army to defend them. Joshua 10...that's where we are today...

*So Joshua & his entire army, including his best warriors, left (went up from) Gilgal & set out for Gibeon. "Do not be afraid of them," the Lord said to Joshua, "for I have given you victory over them. Not a single one of them will be able to stand up to you." Joshua traveled all night from Gilgal & took the Amorite armies by surprise. Quickly...Joshua is only going to battle to protect the Gibeonites because he MESSED UP & made a treat with them to not kill them. God had commanded that all the nations living in the land God was giving Israel were to be wiped out. GET THIS! God has woven Joshua's MISTAKE into his provision for his people. Rom 8:28 "We know God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God & are called according to his purpose for them" Even my dumb mistakes? Yes. Even my foolish decisions? Yes. Even my ill-considered actions? Yes. Even my lack of understanding? Yes. Even my wilfulness? Yes. Why? Because God has called me acc to his purpose. In love, from b/4 the universe existed God chose me as his own in his Son & set my feet on a path that would bring him glory.*

*So Josh & entire army "went up from Gilgal"...Josh travelled all night & took the Amorite armies by surprise...Gilgal to Gibeon is an uphill climb of about 40kms. Rough rocky rugged desert terrain...Uphill. All night. 40kms. I hate walking from my bed to the toilet at night...all manner of obstacles & dangers I might trip over & bump into. Be hanged if I'm going to volunteer for 40ks uphill at night. What drives that kind of thing? "Do not be afraid of them," the Lord said to Joshua, "for I have given you victory over them. Not a single one of them will be able to stand up to you." 5X Josh hears "Do not be afraid" from God. 5X he hears God say "Be strong & courageous." I bet Joshua is repeating that promise every step of those 40kms loud enough so his soldiers hear it.*

*So with that promise reverberating in his heart Josh travelled all night & took the Amorite armies by surprise...The Lord threw them into a panic, & the Israelites slaughtered great numbers of them at Gibeon. Then the Israelites chased the enemy along the road to Beth-horon, killing them all along the way to Azekah & Makkedah. As the Amorites retreated down the road from Beth-horon, the Lord destroyed them with a terrible hailstorm from heaven that continued until they reached Azekah. The hail killed more of the enemy than the Israelites killed with the sword. You know you're having a bad day when hailstones kill more of your soldiers than the opposing army. (could translate all the killing as by God's hand) But evidently there are more soldiers that need killing than there is time to kill them...*

*On the day the Lord gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites,  
Joshua prayed to the Lord in front of all the people of Israel. He said,  
"Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, & the moon over the valley of Aijalon."*

*So the sun stood still & the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies.*

Joshua sees that even though God is hard into the battle w/ him/his army, there's more to the promise he has not yet received. So he prays for the more. God wants us to pray into the fullness of his blessings for us. God wants us to pray/ask for all of the wonderful gifts he has pledged – all of the amazing/awesome things he's promised

Which means we need to align our prayers with what God has commanded, with what God has promised, with what we know God has said in His Word he intends to take place AND our prayers need to be Big Hairy Audacious Prayers...like that one. Really? Yes...Seriously? Yes. *Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Eph 3:20*

Your biggest hairiest most audacious prayer cannot surpass God's ability to answer & give & bless. We know God wants his church to be a vibrant thriving disciple-making generous serving community. We also know the NT shows us the church changes the very atmosphere of the community in which it is planted. So when you pray for LW... please pray something huge...(Acts 19:19) that we would make so many disciples here that all the brothels & fortune-tellers & drug dealers would go out of business. Dr Adrian Rogers – 3-term pres of Southern Baptist Convention "Your witness will never be believable as long as your life is completely explainable" At some point something has to happen in our lives that folks point to & say, "See that right there? That's unexplainable apart from God!"

Do not forget...Receiving that fullness will require faith in action on our part. As God keeps his promises in answer to our prayers we will be called to risk something personally – sacrifice something personally – lay ourselves on the line to see God's good plans for us fulfilled. Joshua had a promise of victory but he still had 40 kms. Uphill. All night. AND a battle to fight & he needed to ask God for an extra-long day in which to fight it.

If you're praying for God to bless LW...bldg of our own...are you sacrificially financially giving toward that prayer? If you're praying for family member/friend to come to faith in Jesus or to re-engage with a life of faith they've walked away from...you are probably going to have to look them in the eye & tell them now is the time & share your faith with them &

invite them to join you in Christ. *We are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything according to his will. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for. 1 Jn 5:14-15* In love, from b/4 the universe existed God chose you/me as his own in his Son & set us on a path that would bring him glory. And Jesus said, *"If you remain in me & my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, & it will be granted! Jn 15:7*

Let's pray:

Father...with you all things are possible and nothing is beyond your desire to strengthen your church's witness in this world. Make us bold in trusting you and courageous in living for what you have promised. Transform this city by our faithfulness to you. Bring in our loved ones who do not yet believe. Raise us up to the forefront of your harvest from among the many who have not yet heard of your great love. In all things hold our hearts close to yours so that we seek only that which pleases you...through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.