

Jericho

God Fights for Us (Joshua 6:1-21)

- Intro

- Two years ago, a young woman in our congregation lost her mom. The situation was complicated—her mom lost her life due to an overdose of pain medication. She had been addicted for years, and over time the daughter had grown to hate her for the addiction and related behaviors. Over the course of the daughter's life, she built a wall of protection against people like her mom. This Sunday made her realize that the wall is more concrete than she had imagined. Anger and bitterness had taken root and grown up around her, forcibly, palpably. For her, and perhaps for you, it's time for a trumpet blast, for the wall to crack and fall.
- Read Joshua 6:1-21

- Discussion Questions

- The Battle Seems Impossible
 - Pastor Matt claimed that we are fighting a spiritual battle today, just as Joshua fought in Israel. Who is our enemy and how does he work against us? Why does he want the Kingdom of God to fail?
 - When people first saw Jericho in our text, they came back and reported that Israel would be foolish to go against it—and they were probably right. It's reasonable to think that Israel would be slaughtered in this battle. How do you know when God is calling you to do something unreasonable in faith? How can you tell when you are using faith as an excuse to do something impulsive and unwise?
 - What walls do we need to let God bring down in our own lives? What things have we built up in our lives to hide from God?
- The Plan Seems Crazy
 - Verses 3-5 show exactly what God wanted the people of Israel to do to take the city of Jericho. The instructions sound ridiculous. Why do you think God would ask them to do something so crazy? (Why couldn't Joshua just raise a staff or something?) Why do you think Israel followed the plan regardless?

Tuesday, August 29, 2017

- One of the main points of this passage is that God fights for Israel—then why does Israel need to fight at all? If God fights for us, then why are we still fighting, and why is the fight so difficult?
- Has God ever called you into something that seemed insane to you? (Have you ever thought about how insane salvation seems from the outside?) What caused you to follow God anyway?
- God's People Walk in Faith
 - Pastor Matt emphasized walking in faith one day at a time and not being overly concerned about the future. Where do we see that principle played out in our passage, and what are some things we have to take a day at a time in our lives?
 - What does it look like for us to trust God in seemingly impossible situations? How do we walk in faith, for example, through sickness? Through money troubles? Through difficult days at work or with parenting?
 - In the end the Israelites rejoiced in their victory through God. What victories have we been given in which we can rejoice?
- Leader Prep Help
 - *The Battle Seems Impossible*
 - Pastor Matt spent a good amount of time on this in his sermon. Sometimes the contrast gets lost on modern readers. Jericho was built as a military outpost against invaders, and it was virtually impenetrable. It had two massive walls. It was well equipped to ride out a siege; they had a well within the city and had provisions in storehouses. Their defensive system was one of the best of the bronze age. Moreover, Israel at this point had never seen a battle, had almost no provisions (remember that the manna has stopped at this point), and no shelter. It's questionable whether or not they even had good weapons available to them. Israel is going to lose this battle. It's suicidal.
 - Though Israel has walked faithfully with God through the forty years in the desert and trusted God's provision in that time, they still have to face war and hardship in the land the LORD has given to them. They had to be frustrated and terrified—only two people in the nation had ever seen the land before they marched to Jericho—and then the plan is insane. You can see the contrast between this generation and the last, who questioned everything God asked them to do in the Exodus. This generation follows God seemingly unquestioningly.

Tuesday, August 29, 2017

- As we go through this story of ancient Israel, keep an eye on Jesus. He relives much of what Israel is going through. He flees to Egypt, but God brings him out. He wanders in the desert for forty...days. He faces unbelievable temptations and follows his Father into a seemingly hopeless situation. All of this emphasizes Jesus as a new beginning for the nation of Israel—a new kind of people for God—one that wouldn't fail to perfectly reveal God to the world and rid the world of sin, reconciling it back to God.
- *The Plan Seems Crazy*
 - God gives Joshua this crazy plan to march around the city for seven days in total silence. On the last day, march around the city seven times while blowing the horns and then shouting. This will make the walls fall. Israel had nothing but the promise of God to depend upon.
 - Why seven days and seven marches on the last day? The number seven in Scripture is always meant to remind us of the creation story, and we've already seen some creation references in this narrative—God hovering over the waters of the Jordan, Israel crossing over, and angel with an out-held sword, etc. This is a new beginning for this people, and they have a chance to live at peace with their God—a fulfillment of the covenant he's made with his people. Blowing trumpets would have announced the arrival of an army. So you can see, the crazy plan actually has a logic to it—but the logic is all depending upon God fighting the battle.
- *God's People Walk in Faith*
 - After the walls came down, the Israelites sacked the city, killed everything, and gave all the loot to the glory of God. They then set the rest of the city on fire. The one thing they did spare was Rahab the prostitute and her family for harboring the spies. The last thing Joshua does is impose a curse on the land of Jericho, basically, whoever rebuilds the city will lose their family. That is the cost to rebuild the city, your children. You have to realize how disheartening this would have been as well. They still had no shelter or provisions, so burning Jericho and killing all of the livestock is, strategically speaking, a horrible idea. Except that God asked them to do it.
 - It's meant to be shocking as you go through the book of Joshua that, by the time you get to the end of the book, Israel has turned to worshipping idols. Why would they abandon and betray a God who has done so much for them? Except, as soon as we ask that question, we realize that we have done the same, and this is the nature of sin. God is faithful to us despite our constant turning away.