

And the Walls Will Come Atumblin Down. Joshua 6: 1-21

Disclaimer: Material from this message was adapted in part from messages found on the Sermon Central website.

An elderly Florida lady having finished her shopping was returning to her car, where she found four men in the act of leaving with her vehicle.

She dropped her shopping bags and drew her handgun, proceeding to scream at them at the top of her voice, "*I have a gun and I know how to use it! Get out of my car, you scumbags!*"

The four men didn't wait for a second invitation, but got out and ran like mad. The lady, somewhat shaken, loaded her shopping bags into the back of the car and got into the driver's seat. She was so shaken that she could not get her key into the ignition. She tried and tried and then it dawned on her why.

A few minutes later she found her own car parked four or five spaces farther down. She loaded her bags into her car and drove to the nearest police station.

The sergeant to whom she told the story was laughing so hard he was crying and pointed to the other end of the counter, where four pale men were reporting a car jacking by a crazy elderly woman described as white, less than 5' tall, glasses and curly white hair, carrying a very large handgun.

No charges were filed.

A crazy old lady with a handgun—that'll scare the dickens out of you! That's not a battle I would want to fight. But, today we are talking about the other battles in our lives, the real ones and why we don't need to be afraid if God is fighting for you.

"**Don't be afraid,**" is one of the most oft-repeated commands in the Bible. I've read that it's repeated 365 times—enough for every day of the year! (*I don't know if that's true—but it's repeated a lot!*). In these Biblical stories we are hearing, God not only tells us not to fear, but why.

The first reason is that just as God promised Joshua, so He also promises us, "**Don't be afraid, for I am with you wherever you go.**" Moses had told the people to follow Joshua, then Moses had died and there stood Joshua – all alone facing 2.5 million people on the wrong side of the flooded Jordan River with no way across. That's when God spoke to him saying, *be strong, be courageous, I will not fail or forsake you. As I was with Moses so I will be with you* (Josh 1:5-9). God is with you always, even when everything seems to go wrong, even in your biggest challenge and in turbulent times. God is with you always, wherever you go —so don't be afraid.

Now today, here is the next truth for us to learn: **Don't be afraid, for the Battle is the Lord's.** Which is where today's story begins, with a song we learned all wrong a long time ago. The song goes, *Joshua fit de battle of Jericho and the walls came atumblin down.* WRONG! Joshua fought no battle. He and all the soldier's in Israel simply walked, watched, and waited as God directed and God brought the walls "atumblin down." In fact the lesson from Jericho that God wanted to teach Israel is

that if they in faith obeyed His commands - no matter how crazy such may seem – then God would win the battle for them; God’s crazy plans for the assault on Jericho were designed to teach Israel that the battle is always the Lord’s (1 Samuel 17:47). So let’s get the story straightened out and then we will proceed to the application.

First, why Jericho? Did you know that Jericho was probably the oldest city to ever exist? Because there were plenty of freshwater springs nearby, people were probably settling there as early as 10,000B.C. Then round 8,000b.c., they built the first protectively walled city in history. Actually multiple versions of the town of Jericho had been built and destroyed before Joshua came and each time the walls got bigger. The Jericho of Joshua’s day was a wealthy, powerful, well armed city sitting on the primary trade route through the land of Canaan. If they were going to capture the Promised Land the Israelis would have to start with Jericho.

Jericho was not a huge city, but it was incredibly fortified with double walls protecting an area of approximately 10 acres inside; each wall approximately 40 feet tall and 6 feet thick. There were houses built between the walls in some places, which is where Rahab’s apartment probably would have been. Approximately 20,000 people normally lived inside the city, but many more had probably come into town seeking refuge from the approaching Israelite army.

The city was prepared for attack. How could Israel break through these walls? they couldn’t starve them out. There were fresh water springs inside the walls, and the Spring Harvest had just taken place, so they had plenty of food and water. Trusting in their impermeability, Jericho was counting on a lengthy siege, which would give the neighboring kingdoms time to amass an army and attack Israel as they wasted time trying to gain an entrance. As the Bible said, *the doors of Jericho were shut, no one came in, and no one left.*

You can imagine how Joshua felt looking at these massive walls for the second time. It was probably these same walls of Jericho that had earlier discouraged the original 12 spies causing them to return with a bad report of “well fortified cities” (Deuteronomy 1:28).

So the walls of Jericho had to come down, this city had to be decisively and quickly defeated, both to send a signal to the other Canaanite kingdoms that Israel was unstoppable and to send a clear signal to the Israelites that with God on their side anything is possible. Which is why Joshua was given these very strange directions for the conquest of Jericho.

A fully armed division of 40,000 soldiers were to march once around the city once a day for six days and then return to camp -- a full circuit taking approximately one hour (4:13). The soldiers were to keep completely silent, returning no insults or challenges coming from the city walls; they were there simply to accompany and protect the Ark of the Covenant and the priests who were blowing on seven shofar (ram’s) horns. On the

seventh day, they then marched 7 times around and at the end of the seventh circuit with a loud blast of the horns and a great shout from the soldiers, the walls would come tumbling down. The soldiers were then to rush in taking the city, killing all the inhabitants, and burning everything to the ground as a sacrifice to God while also sending a terrifying warning to the rest of Canaan about any thoughts of resisting Israel's approach.

For the Israelis, the clues that this was God's fight not theirs, were the presence of the **Ark**, the blowing of **seven rams horns**, and the other multiples of seven: **seven days of circuits**, with seven circuits on the seventh day:

- First because the presence of the Ark meant that God was circling the city.
- Second, the multiple numbers of seven meant that this was a sacred event taking place. The Hebrew word translated "seven" (shevah) comes from a root that means "**to be full, to be satisfied.**" Thus, the number seven speaks of God's ability to finish whatever He started.
- Finally, rather than silver horns which were used to call the people to battle, the priests were blowing ram's horns which were used to announce celebrations such as the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10). Thus the priests were declaring this as a Jubilee event, the year of Israel's in their new land.

So this whole spectacle was meant both as a test of Israel's faith and proof of God's ability win the battle. When the strongest city in Canaan, at God's command, fell without a fight, and all the soldiers had to do was walk, watch, wait, and then light the fire. Which is exactly what took place.

Though modern archeology blames both the draining of the Jordan river and the fall of Jericho's wall on an earthquake – which could have happened, God often uses natural phenomena to accomplish miraculous events – the evidence from the ruins of Jericho is that the walls did fall outward and that everything in the city had been set to the torch (they actually found jars full of grain not quite yet burned). They also found one section of the wall, containing apartments that didn't fall down (Rahab's apartment?). Coincidences? With God there are no coincidences.

Now think about this for a moment from Jericho's point of view. One morning 40,000 armed soldiers – nearly double the number of the city's inhabitants – begin silently circling the walls accompanying the Ark and seven priests who are blowing rams horns. This probably both terrified and confused those inside. Armed and ready for battle they stood at the walls and watched. But after one circuit the parade returned to camp.

Then, each day as the event was reenacted, their terror and confusion would increase; what was their enemy up to? But by the seventh day and now with seven hours of circling, they were perhaps getting bored, getting confident that their walls were truly impermeable! Until with just a shout, the walls came down and in the confusion the enemy rushed in. **There was no battle of Jericho, this was God's choreographed celebration to assure both Israel and rest of the world, that**

the battle belongs to the Lord. So if you are on the Lord's side, there is no reason to be afraid; if not, you should be afraid, very afraid.

Which brings us to today's application.

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ... things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

1 Cor. 1:27-29 paraphrased

God's plan for the conquest of Jericho was seemingly foolish, but it worked. God's wisdom is far above ours and He delights in using people and plans that seem foolish to the world (Isa. 55:8-9). Whether it's Joshua with trumpets, Gideon with torches and pitchers, or David with his sling, God delights in using weakness and seeming foolishness to defeat His enemies and glorify His name.

For us the lesson is the same as it was for Israel. ***Don't be afraid, for I am with you wherever you go, and the battle always belongs to the Lord.***

Whether we realize it or not, like it or not, we Christians are still locked in a global spiritual battle for the souls of humanity. *The world, the flesh, and the devil* (Eph. 2:1-3) are united against Christ and His people just as the nations in Canaan were united against Joshua and the Israelis.

As Pastor Warren Wiersbe noted in his commentary,

"it's unfortunate that many of the "militant songs" of the church have been removed from some hymnals, apparently because the idea of warfare disturbs people. But these zealous editors with scissors seem to have forgotten that the main theme of the Bible is God's holy warfare against Satan and sin. In the beginning, God declared war on Satan, and one day He will declare the victory when Jesus comes as a conquering king to establish His kingdom" (Genesis 3:1, Rev. 19:11-21, Wiersbe page 396)

Too many Christians want to emphasize "peace and goodwill" while ignoring the spiritual battle against sin. This means they've already lost the victory and are working for the enemy. We must never forget Paul's warning about the savage wolves that are ready to destroy the flock (Acts 20:28-29). The Christian's warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against enemies in the spiritual realm and the weapons we use are spiritual (Eph. 6:10-18, 2 Cor. 10:3-6).

A pastor attended a court hearing to protest the building of a tavern near his church and a public school. The lawyer for the tavern owners said to him, "I'm

surprised to see you here today, Reverend. As a shepherd, shouldn't you be out taking care of the sheep?" The pastor replied, "Today I'm fighting the wolf!"

Since the apostle Paul often used the military image to describe the Christian life, we dare not ignore the subject (Eph. 6:10ff.; 2 Tim. 2:1-4; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:8). Israel's victory at Jericho illustrates three principles of spiritual conflict and victory applicable to our lives today, no matter what challenges we may be called to confront.

So, don't be afraid, if we are on the Lord's side we will always fight our battles from a position of victory

As God told Moses on the shores of the Red Sea, *the Lord will fight for you; you need only be still*, now he assures Joshua, that the victory was already won before he ever set his foot on the field of battle. *Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men (6:2)*. Both times, God was declaring victory before fighting even began.

As Christians, we forget that we live in a position of victory. We often give up or give in, when we should be striving on because we have already won the battle. The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Jesus has defeated Satan and has conquered death. The final victory has already been won. **Even though the enemy fights on, the war is over and the victory has been secured. In the scope of things, we may take a few lumps and may have some failures but in the end we win.**

The victory is ours; we need to start living like it. One of the last things Jesus told his disciples was,

I have said this to you, so that
in me you may have peace.
In the world you face persecution.
But take courage; I have conquered the world!
John 16:33

But victory flows out of obedience. Before any battle can

be won there has to be a plan to win the victory. This means that a sound and reasonable plan must be developed and then executed.

There were at least five ways to conquer a walled city in that day: by scaling the wall using ladders or ramps, by digging tunnels underneath the walls, by using battering rams to break open the city gates or else to smash a hole in the walls, by laying siege to the city until the people were starved into surrender, or by using some means of deception such as a truce or ambush. There can be no doubt that Joshua had something like this in mind before God laid out His plan victory: quietly march around the city with priests blowing rams horns, waiting for God to knock the walls down.

From a military standpoint, this plan was foolishness. There are times when God wants us to do things that others may think is foolish. The Apostle Paul understood this, when he wrote *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength* (1 Corinthians 1:25). With all the power and an angelic army available to Him, it seemed foolish for Jesus to quietly surrender and let Himself be killed. But in His death, defeating the Devil, paying our debt and freeing us from sin, Jesus accomplished far more than He ever could in his life. Scripture says for us to follow the lead of Jesus who trusted God his Father to win the battle for Him (Hebrews 12:1-3).

So, while the battle always belonged to the Lord, this Jericho plan was all about getting the people of God on the same page with God. Why did God make the plan last seven days? One commentator said that God knew it would take that long before the people would fully accept His plan. **Faith grows out of obedience.** The people of Israel were humbled before the enemy and the people of Jericho stopped seeing them as a true threat. They were humbled before God accepting the plan He had given to them. There are times when we need to humble ourselves before we can see victory.

We also need to wait for God to work.

Patience is a virtue, but there are a lot of times when we would like to be less virtuous and for God to get things done more quickly. We are a society that hates to wait. We are the people of microwave meals and fast food. We want to be in and out of the stores as fast as possible. We hate standing in line and traffic jams send our blood pressure skyrocketing.

The plan that God laid out for Joshua was going to take seven days to complete and there would be no fighting until the seventh day. Over the week the people would have circled Jericho 13 times. This would have been a long process. The seventh day involved seven times around the city. This could have taken anywhere between seven to fourteen hours to complete. This would have involved a great deal of patience.

Day after day the Israelites got up and marched around the city and the walls still stood. They didn't even budge one time. Over and over again, they circled Jericho and nothing gave any sign that God's plan was working.

Their walk revealed nothing to them but showed a great deal about them. The people revealed their trust in God. As the people walked around Jericho their faith was growing. They knew the battle was already won and that the city was theirs. All they needed to do was walk, watch and wait.

The same is true of us today. We need to keep **walking** with Jesus, taking action where we have been told to move, but also **watching** for his work to be completed and **waiting** for His return. **walking is an action, watching shows awareness, waiting is an attitude of faith.**

The war has been won, but our battles are not over, when we walk with God in faith, He makes the impossible a reality and we win the victory. Faith enables us to live in the victory that God means for us to have even in the midst of the fight. As the writer of Hebrews noted, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell, [only] after the people had marched around them for seven days." (11:30).

The walls came down not by force or fighting, not even by faith, The walls came down by God's hand, the soldiers need only to keep the faith and watch Him work.

Sometimes the greatest battles we face will not be against others or other things. Sometimes they are against ourselves.

What battles are you fighting?

What battles haven't you let God fight for you?

Are you willing to give up your plans and get on the same page with God?

- With Jesus, you are already in a position of victory
- but victory flows out of your obedience
- as you wait for God's timing, not your own

Let's pray about this.