

Joshua 5:13-6:5, 20
Second Sunday after Pentecost
Sermon Series: Saving Faith
Saving Faith Trusts in God's Almighty Power

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13 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?"

14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

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 so.

6:1 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. **3** March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. **4** Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. **5** When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.

Last week, we focused in our message on the words of the blessing that we hear at the end of our service each week, a blessing which God gave to His people as they prepared to go and take possession of the Promise Land. When they arrived at the borders of Canaan, two men, Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim and Caleb from the tribe of Judah, trusting in that promise urged the people to go into the land and with the Lord on their side drive the Canaanites out before them. But the rest of them were afraid, they heard the reports of the fortified cities and the men who looked like giants that were there defending them, and their faith in God failed, and they refused to take the land as the LORD had commanded them.

So for forty years, God sentenced the Israelites to wander about in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula until everyone from that rebellious generation had died. Everyone, that is except Joshua and Caleb who all along had continued to trust in God's promises. And when those forty years had come to an end, God sent Joshua, who had succeeded Moses as the leader of His people, to lead them at last into the Promise Land. And that's where we find Joshua in our text today.

There's a lot we can learn from the account of Joshua and the Battle of Jericho. In the battle, we see a tremendous demonstration of God's Almighty Power, and in Joshua, we see an impressive example of how *Saving Faith Trusts in God's Almighty Power* as Joshua submits himself to the Lord as His humble servant, and fights not for victory, but from victory.

The Israelites came into the land from the East, crossing over the Jordan River which God parted for them just as he had done to the Red Sea when they had left Egypt with Moses some forty years before. They crossed just north of the Dead Sea, about twenty miles east of Jerusalem coming over into the plains of Jericho. And there they were, face to face with their first major obstacle, the great walled city of Jericho. I imagine as Joshua looked across the plains at that fortress there must have been a bunch of questions flying through his mind. “This is it, isn’t it? My first test as the leader of God’s people. How am I going to take this city? What strategy should I use?”

And as Joshua stood there, looking out over Jericho, we’re told **he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand.** The man identified himself as the **commander of the army of the LORD.** Joshua knew there was only one who could claim that title. Standing here before him was the LORD Himself.

As soon as Joshua realizes that, he submits. He falls straight to the ground and bows before Him asking, **“What message does my Lord have for his servant?”** If we could set a goal for ourselves each morning as we get up to meet the new day, it would be hard to find a better goal than to follow the example of faith that Joshua shows us here, to recognize God as our Lord and submit to Him as His humble servants. Not until we take our place as servants can God take His place in our lives as Lord. Let me say that one again: Not until you take your place as a servant, can God take His place in your life as Lord.

God has an amazing plan for you, to lead you through your life into the promised land of heaven that He has in store for you. Trying to get into heaven on our own, without God as our Lord and without His help would be even more impossible than it would have been for Joshua to cross that plain by himself and attempt to capture the city of Jericho singlehandedly. The difference is it isn’t walls keeping us out of heaven. It’s our own sinfulness. Our only hope is to submit ourselves to the God who loves us and has paved the way for us by removing our sin and allow Him to guide us. Then, with the all-powerful God as our Lord, nothing can stop us. Submission is not something that comes naturally to us. We want to pilot our own course; we want to be in control. Recognizing that we aren’t and placing our lives into God’s hands takes a leap of faith. But thank God, He gives us that saving faith as He works in our hearts through the Word.

“Take off your sandals, the LORD continued, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. You might remember that something similar had happened eighty years earlier to Moses, God had appeared to him not as an army commander, but as flames of unquenchable fire from within a bush. As Moses approached the bush, he heard that same command, **Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground** (Ex 3:5). It wasn’t that there was anything innately special about that patch of ground at the foot of Mount Sinai or the patch on the plains of Jericho where Joshua was now; it was God’s presence that made that ground holy.

So what about the ground you stand on? When we submit ourselves to the Lord as His servants and devote ourselves to carrying out His will, He’s present here with us. And not just here, at church on a Sunday morning, God is present with you wherever you go throughout the whole week! So what does that mean? What are we supposed to do if we’re walking on holy ground? Take off our shoes or our sandals? No, God has shown us an even better reaction to walking on holy ground. He wants us to make our walk holy too.

For the rest of your lives you will be walking through this world on holy ground. And it’s holy not because of anything special about the ground, but because of something that is very

special about you. Here it is: God is with you. **So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God**, because the ground you are walking on is holy, and Jesus your almighty Lord and Savior is right there with you at your side.

Then, as we get into chapter six, the LORD lays out His battle plans: **“Look, He said to Joshua, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.”**

Walk around the city each day for a week and on the last day, when you’re done, yell really loud, and the walls will just fall down. Those are the instructions that God gave to Joshua. Now, I wouldn’t be the least bit surprised if Joshua had responded with something along the lines of, “Really? Really, God? Just walk around, shout, and blow on some horns? That’s going to work? That’s how we defeat Jericho? That’s going to bring this city down?” But Joshua didn’t question God’s plan, not even for a moment. He went right back to camp and gave the orders just as God had commanded him. And we see the result in verse 20: **On the seventh day, when the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.**

You see Joshua understood that the most important part of what the Lord had told him was not that God was going to deliver Jericho into his hands, but that he *had already* delivered Jericho into His hands. The plan may not have sounded like one that would bring him victory, but that was okay, it didn’t have to. The Battle for Jericho was already won. Joshua knew that all *he* had to do—as ridiculous as it may have sounded—was trust in his Lord and do as He had told him to do.

The exact same scenario is true for you and me. As we fight through spiritual battles in our lives we are not fighting *for* victory, we are fighting *from* victory. The night before He died, Jesus told His disciples about the struggles they would have as Christians in a sinful world. **You will have trouble in this world**, He said. **But take heart! I have overcome the world.**

I want you to take your fingers and place them on your neck, right alongside your throat. Do you feel that? Do you feel that little thump thump? That’s your pulse. That’s your heart pumping blood through your body. And I can guarantee that as long as you still have that pulse—as long as you are still alive in this world—you are going to run into Jerichos, obstacles that you feel like you can’t get around, battles that you don’t know if you can win. I know that some of you are facing those obstacles in your lives right now. I know that this past week some of you have been fighting those battles. Trust me when I tell you that if you try to push through that obstacle by yourself, or fight that battle on your own you have already lost.

But you are *not* alone. Take off your sandals. Get down on your knees, because the place where you are standing is holy ground. It is holy because God, in all of His almighty power, is standing right there with you. He has already won the battle. And He is ready and able to place that victory into your hands. All *we* have to do is give up control, and trust in our Lord to lead us through it.

When you get up in the morning and you open up the door to set out into another day, there are three paths that you can choose from. The first path is to make the best plans you possibly can to get yourself through the day and then do the best that you possibly can to carry

out those plans. The second one is to lay out your plans and then, having determined to carry them out as best you can, ask for God's blessing on them and on you. Or, you can start by asking the Lord for His plan, and then offer yourself as His servant to carry it out.

God's plan is for you to know His promises. Promises which He gives us in His Word:

- **The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them** (Ps 34:7).
- **Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you** (Ps 50:15).
- **Submit yourselves to Me, resist the devil and he will flee from you** (Ja 4:7).
- **Do not worry, about what you will eat or what you will drink, or where you will find clothes to wear. I know you need these things. But seek first My kingdom and My righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well** (Mt 6:31-33).
- **As far as the East is from the West, so far have I removed your sins from you** (Psalm 103:12).
- **I love you so much that I gave My one and only Son for you. Believe in Him and you will not perish but will have eternal life** (Jn 3:16).
- **For although the penalty for sin is death, My gift to you is eternal life** (Rm 6:23).
- **You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand** (Is 41:9-10).

God's plan for you is to believe His promises. And so by the miracle of the Holy Spirit working through the Word, He has created saving faith in your hearts. And finally, God's plan for you is to reckon on His promises. Not just knowing them and believing them but then living accordingly.

When we do that, when we trust in God's almighty power, submitting to our Lord as His servants, and fighting each new battle not to win it but knowing that it has already been won, then we will be victorious. Amen.