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Breaking Down the Walls
Joshua 6:1-20
March 13, 2016, Jeff Germon

This is our last sermon in the Crossing Jordan series. Last week we looked at Joshua chapter 5 at how God was preparing the Israelites to fulfill their mission. And we saw that there are some things that we need to know if we are going to fulfill the mission that God has called us to. We need to know that:

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- 1. God is at work preparing hearts.**
- 2. We have to give up the right to self-rule.**
- 3. God is good for His promises.**
- 4. God will give us a heart after Him if we step out in obedience.**
- 5. God will give us what we need to do the job.**
- 6. It is God's agenda not ours.**

The Israelites didn't even have time to settle down before they realized that crossing the Jordan and entering into the Promised Land was only the beginning of God's plan for them. Verse two of chapter 6 is likely a continuation of the conversation that Joshua had with the Captain of the LORD's army, who, as we said last week, may have been a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

This meeting was designed to give Joshua confidence in knowing that God was with him in this expedition, and to fill him in on what was to take place next after the Israelite men had recuperated from their circumcision operations.

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Joshua 6:1 (NLT)

¹ 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.

Verse one is simply a parenthetical statement to let the reader know that God had prepared the people of Jericho. And that because of the fear that permeated Jericho the city was shut tight. There was no way in or out. This presented a big problem for the Israelites because they did not have the kind of weapons that could take a city like this.

They didn't have battering rams or catapults or any of the other kinds of large artillery that was used in those days to capture walled cities. There would have to be another way. So, the Captain of the LORD's army tells Joshua how things are going to play out.

He begins in verse two by telling Joshua,

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Joshua 6

²...“I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors.

This is a very familiar way God has communicated with the Israelites all along. He uses the past perfect tense. I *have already given* Jericho to you. It is a done deal. I have decreed that it will be so. Yahweh has spoken. Now all you have to do is be obedient. And he goes on to tell Joshua his great plan.

What's this great plan that the LORD tells Joshua?

Obviously it's going to make perfect sense, right? It's coming straight from the mouth of Jesus. It would be one of those great strategies that an officer would learn in military school, right?

"Take all your fighting men, Joshua." Sounds good so far.

"Take your fighting men, send them to military school, train them in warfare, build battering rams, and catapults, make sure that you have all your I^s dotted and your T^s crossed, and then go smash down the gate and the walls."

That is what one would expect him to say, isn't it?

The LORD continues,

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³ You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days.

Aha, right... go on. "And while we do that, the women stay back at camp and build the battering rams." "There's gotta be something more than this. The walls around the city are huge. There is no way that we can penetrate such an obstacle. There's gotta be more."

Oh, yes, don't worry. There's more. And it gets more ridiculous.

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***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.***

"But, LORD, if we do this can you imagine what people will think of us? They will be looking down from the wall of Jericho and laughing at us. They will think we're nuts. You gotta have something more than this, LORD. Give us something that makes sense." "No, that's it. If you are obedient even when it sounds ridiculous, you will see me do amazing things."

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When all the people let out the shouts as I have told you ...the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."

Well, you know the story. The people do exactly as the LORD told them. They march around the city once each day for six days, and on the seventh day they march around seven times with the priests blowing their rams horns. Then the priests give one long blast and when the people hear it they shout as loud as they can and when they do, the impossible happens – the walls of the city collapse.

Now, what would have happened if they marched around only 5 times and then gave up? Or if they marched around once each day for six days as he told them, but then only marched around six times on the seventh day instead of seven times like the LORD told them? What do you think would have happened if they only obeyed partly? They would have been defeated. They would have forfeited the blessing that God had reserved for them.

So, what does this mean for us in the year 2016 at Campbell River Baptist Church in Campbell River, BC? God has called us to take the land he has given us. How do I know that? Because we are here. It's as simple as that.

Let me paint a general picture, in very simple terms, of what happened in chapter 6. God gave them a mission. The mission seemed impossible from their human perspective. There were many obstacles to overcome. If they were going to be successful they would have to do it God's way. They are obedient and God helps them to overcome some very huge obstacles, and God gets the glory.

Now, this little picture I painted for you is very relevant to every one of us almost every day of our lives with God. God has given us a mission – each one of us. The mission is impossible in our own strength, and at times the obstacles are so great that it can be very discouraging.

Where is the money going to come from? Where are the people going to come from? There are people in opposition. There is so much to do and so little resources. It all seems so impossible.

Here's the deal. If we are obedient to his way of doing things his mission for us will be a success, and he will get the glory.

Now, I would imagine most of us can attest to the truth of these principles. We have seen them work over and over again in our walk with God.

So, let's talk about some of the principles.

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1. God has a plan

I have said this over and over again for the last two and a half years. God is up to something. His plan is outlined in the Bible. It hasn't changed since before time began. His plan is to build for himself a people who love him and who take his mission seriously.

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1 Peter 2 (NLT)

⁵ And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

This is God's plan for us. God is building a people for himself who are serious about pleasing him with their lives. He is building a people who are wholeheartedly devoted to joining him in his plan of redemption.

We are the raw stones that he takes and cleans off, and chips off the rough edges so we fit into his temple making us into a people that pleases him with everything we think, say and do. How do we please him? By fulfilling the two greatest commands he gave us. Love God, Love People. How do we love God and love people?

We fulfill his great commission.

We make disciples by teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded us. What did Jesus command us? Love each other.

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That is his mission. It's called discipleship. We **bring people into** the family. We **build them up** in their faith. We **train them well** so they can then be **sent out** and bring more people into the family, who will then be built up and trained well and sent out and the cycle continues perpetually.

This is God's plan for us. His plan is not to build a big church for the sake of building a big church. We are all here for one reason, to build big people who love God and love people and obey everything that Jesus commanded us. That is his plan for us.

So, the question for all of us this morning is, are we a part of that mission? How are we allowing God to use us? What do we spend our money, time, energy and talents on?

The next thing that I want you to notice is that;

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2. His plan is spiritual in nature

If his purposes were military, or expansionistic just for the sake of taking over more land or getting more people he would have used means that would make sense militarily. God didn't have to make them march around Jericho 13 times in order for his plan to work. It wasn't a formula. If his goal was just to knock down the walls of Jericho he could have done it with one word.

His purposes were spiritual. It was about the process. He was teaching them to trust him. He was teaching them that the battle is not a human battle, it is a spiritual one.

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2 Corinthians 10 (NLT)

³ We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴ We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵ We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God.

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Ephesians 6 (NLT)

¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

We are in a spiritual battle and, if the battle is spiritual, we need to make sure we are using spiritual weapons and methods, and not necessarily the methods that are used in the world. If, for instance, it was our purpose as a church to build a huge organization we could use all the latest marketing techniques and put on a circus act of sorts to attract a crowd. And if we did those things the circus act would have to get wilder and more exciting all the time in order to keep the crowd, and we would be tempted to compromise truth for expedience.

Our mission is spiritual, and our methods must be spiritual.

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a. The methods we use must be spiritual

When God gave the Israelites their mission, he gave them the method as well. And it was nothing like they would have expected. Why? Because it was a spiritual exercise. We think all we have to do is be prepared with a clear presentation of the gospel and people have to believe.

Take a look at **Acts 28**.

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²³ So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe.

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²⁵ And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet, ²⁶ 'Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend.

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²⁷For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'

I have no idea how many people I have shared the gospel with. I think I have a pretty clear presentation. To me it seems fool proof. Why doesn't everyone I shared it with fall down on their knees in humility and repent? Because it's not a problem of logic.

It is a problem of a dead spirit that has to be quickened by the Holy Spirit, so they can respond and be raised to life with Christ. **WE cannot convert anyone.**

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That is not our job. **Our job is to be obedient.**

God told the Israelites to go into the Promised Land and take the city of Jericho – an impossible job for them that would take methods that would seem very strange. Their typical military strategy would not work because God was calling them to a spiritual mission.

When God sets you up with a divine appointment, what is your responsibility? Is it your responsibility to be prepared with all the answers so that you have an airtight presentation of

the gospel? Yes, we should be equipped with a knowledge of scripture, but just having the right answers will not save someone.

For example, let's say you are sitting at home enjoying your favourite TV program and you hear a knock on the door. You go and open the door and you see a couple adults with a little child all dressed very nicely. They want to visit with you and tell you all about their religion. A Divine appointment, perhaps.

These people are ringing your doorbells and calling you on the phone because they believe passionately that they have the truth and that you are a pagan who believes in a three headed God that you call the Trinity. They want to convert you. That is their goal.

Now, what is going to happen if you go head to head? You have all the answers to straighten out their twisted beliefs. Will they just fall on their knees and repent? Why not? Because it's not a problem of logic. It is a spiritual problem, and we have to use spiritual methods.

Or maybe you have been talking with a loved one about your faith and you have told them numerous times the plan of salvation and they refuse to believe. They just don't get it. Why? Because it is not a problem of logic. It is a spiritual problem.

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c. We will never debate someone into the kingdom

Some of you might be familiar with the navigators bridge. It's a method of presenting the gospel in a very clear way.

Man is on one side. **[20]**

God is on the other with a huge chasm separating the two sides.

And in that chasm is our biggest problem **[21]** – sin. And because of God's holiness and our sin, we can't have a relationship with him. But, he loved us so much that he sent his only Son into the world to bridge **[22]** the gap. And if we accept this gift we can cross over **[23]** and have a wonderful relationship with him.

This is all good stuff. We should all know how to present this. But, it is not our job to make people cross over to the other side.

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It is not our job to convert. We have to remember this. Take the pressure off yourself. We do not produce the results.

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1 Corinthians 3 (NLT)

⁶ I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. ⁷ It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. ⁹ For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.

We have to be very clear about this. Your job is not to share the Navigators bridge or the Four Spiritual Laws and try to sign people up. Sales techniques do not work. When I was younger in my faith I tried to sign people up as if the gospel was a multi-level marketing scheme. When we attempt to do that we are trying to do the job of the Holy Spirit.

So, what is our job? Our job is to be obedient. Our job is to keep our eyes open for what God is doing. Our job is to love God and love people, and to open our mouth when God prompts us to do so. Our job is to pray for those around us, and to be sensitive when their hearts are ready to receive the seed of the gospel.

God is at work. His Spirit is working right now in those who are around. It is not our job to be the hero or the Saviour. That God's job. God has given us a ridiculous strategy to build his church. He didn't tell us to come up with fool proof plans, or have a circus act to draw a crowd, or use all kinds of marketing techniques. You know what he told us to do? **Love your neighbour.**

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Pray for them. Serve them. Show them the love of Christ. Jesus said they will know that we are his disciples if we love each other. And then watch as the Holy Spirit sets up divine appointments for you. I know that's true because many of you have told me how you have started watching God work around you and you have seen him set them up for you.

As each of us takes this call seriously, God is going to use us to be channel through which Jesus will change one heart at a time.



Crossing Jordan VI
Spiritual Markers
Joshua 6
Week of March 13, 2016

Objective of this study: To understand from a heart level that God wants to use us to be a conduit of hope to those around us and the methods he will use may not be what we would consider normal.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

- A. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
- B. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
- C. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalms 147:1-11** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

What is the biggest change you have seen in yourself in the last year?

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

- A. What stood out from the sermon?
- B. Read Joshua chapter 6.
- C. Review the points from the previous week's sermon.
 - 1. **God is at work preparing hearts.**
 - 2. **We have to give up the right to self-rule.**
 - 3. **God is good for His promises.**
 - 4. **God will give us a heart after Him if we step out in obedience.**
 - 5. **God will give us what we need to do the job.**
 - 6. **It is God's agenda not ours.**

Our Methods Must Be Spiritual

Sermon Quote: **"We are in a spiritual battle and, if the battle is spiritual, we need to make sure we are using spiritual weapons and methods, and not necessarily the methods that are used in the world."**

- D. Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-5 and Ephesians 6:12.
- E. Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.

What unusual methods did Jehoshaphat use in this battle?

Work (30 - 45 minutes)

Our Job is to Be Obedient

Sermon Quote: **“God is at work. His Spirit is working right now in those who are around us. It is not our job to be the hero or the Saviour. That God’s job. God has given us a ridiculous strategy to build his church. He didn’t tell us to come up with fool proof plans, or have a circus act to draw a crowd, or use all kinds of marketing techniques. You know what he told us to do? LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR”**

F. When we are talking with people, what is our responsibility and what is God’s? (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)

Divine Appointments

G. What are divine appointments? How do you recognize them? When God sets you up with a divine appointment, what should you do?

Sermon Quote: **“He has not called to play church or go to church. He has called us to BE the church — in our community, homes, school, and work.”**

H. What does it mean to BE the church?

I. What does it mean to build big people?

Sermon Quote: **“We will never debate someone into the kingdom.”**

Have you ever tried? Did it work? What happened? What are people actually looking for in conversation? What reaches their hearts?

Sermon Quote: **“Our job is to be obedient, pray, love, and watch for divine appointments. Not to be a hero or a saviour. That job is taken. Jesus is the hope of the world and he has called us to be conduits of this hope. AS PEOPLE SEE US BEING TRANSFORMED THEY WILL SEE JESUS”**

Sermon Quote: **So, what is our job? Our job is to be obedient. Our job is to keep our eyes open for what God is doing. Our job is to love God and love people, and to open our mouth when God prompts us to do so. Our job is to pray for those around us, and to be sensitive when their hearts are ready to receive the seed of the gospel.**

J. Take a few minutes to talk about what this means for your life. Are there changes you need to make? Pray together that God would help you open your eyes to what he is doing around you and give you the courage to join him.