

WD December 30, 2024

Title: "Faith Has Come Knocking"

Text: Joshua 6

It stood larger than anything they had ever seen. The Great City of Jericho was all that stood in the way of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. It was a city embraced by impenetrable walls. These walls were believed to be 32 feet high and 12 feet thick.

The first time the Israelites saw the city of Jericho it scared them back into the wilderness. 10 out of 12 spies said it was too hard. The majority believed them and God sent the people packing for 40 years. It took 40 years and a whole new generation of desert dwellers for the Israelites to finally trust God enough to take on Jericho. It's kind of funny in a way. These people saw God pound on the Egyptians, Part the Red Sea, and Even change Moses into a night light because God's glory was literally rubbing off on Moses. But they still thought God was too small to destroy the walls of Jericho. When they got there they complained. "It's too big." "We just can't do it." "Well, Moses we tried, see ya back in Egypt"—at least the first generation did. The second time would be different.

God promised the Israelites that the city of Jericho would fall. God, however, had a very special way of defeating the city of Jericho. It wasn't with polevaults. It wasn't with a super-canon. It wasn't by catapulting soldiers over the wall. It wasn't even with a battering ram. Nope.

Joshua 6 tells us that the Lord instructed the Israelites to march around the city one time each day for six days. The Ark of the Covenant was to march in front with all of Israel marching behind—in total silence. On the seventh day the Israelites marched around the city seven times. After the seventh time the marching stopped. The trumpeters blew their horns and the people shouted.

Can you imagine the laughter of the folks in Jericho? "Hey Joshua are you sure you wouldn't rather join an aerobics class?" It must have seemed ridiculous to the Israelites as well. "March around the city?" "Shout at the wall?" "What's that going to do?"

Well, as we know it did plenty. The seventh day came and people did as they were told. And the walls came crashing down. The Israelites marched straight in and destroyed everything in their path. The mighty walls of Jericho couldn't stand up to God. And neither could anything else. "If God is for us who can stand against us?"

Over and over again the Bible shows us how God turns the ridiculous into miraculous. And nowhere is this more true than with Jesus. "God as a baby?" Jesus took flesh to dwell among us (John 1:14). He looked like any one of us. He worked like anyone of us. But He would die for all of us. Imagine how ridiculous it must have seemed to Pilate that Jesus, "King of the Jews" would be so rejected by Jews. Imagine how it must have seemed to everyone that someone so powerful with miracles wouldn't even attempt to save Himself. He just let Himself die. Yep.

Jesus would die on a cross as a criminal. God was using the same technique He used in Jericho. The people shouted at the walls of Jericho and the walls fell. Jesus shouted, "It is finished." And the walls between us and heaven were torn from top to bottom. If this kind of Savior is standing for us, who can stand against us?

2025 is upon us and we will face our walls too. Maybe it's a wall of health problems. Maybe we are facing a wall of financial changes or unexpected expenses. Maybe we are facing a wall of mourning. Maybe it's the walls of uncertainty. Or maybe its just wall of change.

Lord knows we are going to face a lot of change this year at Grace. We aren't moving from the wilderness to the Promised Land, nor changing our diets from manna and water to a land flowing with milk and honey. But we are changing some faces this year; faces we have known for a very long time. This next month we will be interviewing four potential pastors to come and serve at Grace. They may all be great. They also may all be inclined to stay where they serve already. Likewise a new music director will be sought. That is still a process we are only beginning to understand. But before you know it Pastor K. will be retiring and so will Helen.

Since we can say that this is still the Lord's Church, I imagine this year in the same light as facing Jericho. The Lord doesn't want us focused on the walls but on Him. He calls us to trust in Him above the Walls. It's important that we have those ears to hear. Walk around the walls for seven days. Then yell at the

walls. Anyone in their right mind will look at the way Jericho fell and shake their heads. If the Lord were not with the Israelites those walls would have just kept laughing at the Israelites. But because the Israelites marched each day in silence they were walking in obedience to the Word. It was the Word of God that brought down those walls. The Israelites were just the agents of God's activity. And so are we at Grace. Our purpose does not change even if the faces of the congregation do.

And let's remember that when those walls came down a new chapter for Israel had begun. This year, walls will fall, and a new chapter will begin. We can remember the blessings of the last thirty plus years and remember the same Lord continues to be with Grace Lutheran in the next call. The key is to remember what God has done so that we can remember what may be possible in what lies ahead. The Lord invites to follow His Word and to trust in Him and we will do well to lean into that invitation.

This year of course, needs lots of prayer for us to be wise, humble, discerning spirits. I would encourage you to pray and stay vigilant as members of Grace. We still have a purpose to fulfill and work to do. May the Lord bless 2025 and let us remember that He has always been faithful throughout the nearly 100 years of our congregation. Blessed New Year to you.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30