

**EASTSIDE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2021**  
**SERMON: TRUSTING THE STRATEGIES OF GOD**  
**TEXT: JOSHUA 6:1-20**

*(play "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" – Bob Cole Conservatory of Music @ California State University, Long Beach. The CSULB Chamber Choir, Jonathan Talberg. Arrangement by Moses Hogan)*

Anyone who has been in the church long enough to sit through a number of sermons or who grew up going to Sunday School has been intrigued by the story of Joshua and the City of Jericho otherwise known as "The Battle of Jericho". It has been the subject of story, song, musicals, and movies. The sad part is that not many people get beyond the "story" and understand the "message" or "teaching."

There are some who even hear the story and then try to naturally explain away a supernatural act of God on behalf of His people. Even worse, when not only the world, but Christians try to understand God's miracles by denying the miracle itself or by trying to make the story more palatable for a non-Christian audience. We tend to be a cynical bunch and I know that I am very quick to dismiss the so-called supernatural.

Why is it important to understand and accept the "Battle of Jericho" as it is written? It goes to our understanding of God, our belief in the sovereignty of God, and our very faith! Do we believe that God can and will act on our behalf – even in a divine, supernatural way? Can we state by faith, that God did, in a miraculous way, give Jericho into the hands of the Israelites, without the Israelites engaging in battle? As we dig deeper into the story, we see that the Battle of Jericho is actually giving us valuable lessons on living victorious lives.

Let's go to our scripture lesson today – **Joshua 6:1-20:**

**6 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. <sup>2</sup> But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. <sup>3</sup> You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."**

**<sup>6</sup> So Joshua called together the priests and said, "Take up the Ark of the LORD's Covenant, and assign seven priests to walk in front of it, each carrying a ram's horn." <sup>7</sup> Then he gave orders to the people: "March around the town, and the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the LORD."**

**<sup>8</sup> After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the rams' horns started marching in the presence of the LORD, blowing the horns as they marched. And the Ark of the LORD's Covenant followed behind them. <sup>9</sup> Some of the armed men marched in front of the priests with the horns and some behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns. <sup>10</sup> "Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!" <sup>11</sup> So the Ark of the LORD was carried around the town once that day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp.**

**<sup>12</sup> Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests again carried the Ark of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The seven priests with the rams' horns marched in front of the Ark of the LORD, blowing their horns. Again the armed men marched both in front of the priests with the horns and behind**

**the Ark of the LORD. All this time the priests were blowing their horns. <sup>14</sup> On the second day they again marched around the town once and returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.**

**<sup>15</sup> On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the town as they had done before. But this time they went around the town seven times. <sup>16</sup> The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the town! <sup>17</sup> Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed<sup>[a]</sup> as an offering to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.**

**<sup>18</sup> "Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. <sup>19</sup> Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury."**

**<sup>20</sup> When the people heard the sound of the rams' horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it.**

Have you ever thought to yourself how strange the "Battle of Jericho" truly is? God goes out of his way to choose a bizarre means to do His will!

Last week we talked about how God had brought the people miraculously across the Jordan River and now they are in the land of promise. The inhabitants of the land are scared to death about the next step the Israelites will take. Then God decides to halt the movement forward so that the people can make their lives right with Him! Circumcision was reinstated as was the celebration of Passover. God's plan, already was crazy – cripple your army while you are living right beside them. God's plan worked! The people of Jericho had been so traumatized by the approach of the Israelite

masses that they choose to wait to defend rather than take the initiative to attack.

Now the time had come! Archeology tells us that Jericho was probably a city of 1200 people – large for the day. It was the central business, urban hub. People also lived in the rural area surrounding the city. When the Israelites were approaching the area, the protocol would have been for the rural population to take haven within the walls. The harvest had or was taking place so there would be plenty of food for the inhabitants of the city. Jericho had a natural water source that flowed within the city, so the need for water was taken care of.

Once again, archeology fills us in on what the walls were like Jericho was not particularly unique for fortress cities of the day. I found on the website ***Israel-ahistoryof.com***, this description of the walls.

These walls were structured on a three-tiered plan. The walls started with an earthen rampart, or embankment, which ran from ground level upwards on an incline to a stone retaining wall - the second tier. The stone retaining wall stood 12 to 15 feet in height (4-5m) on top of the earthen embankment, as the digital image below depicts.

On top of the stone retaining wall, stood another wall made of mudbricks, 6 feet (2m) thick, and 20 to 26 feet (6-8m) high. Together these two walls combined to form a fortification 32 to 41 feet high.

To put this into perspective, envision a 4-story tall building. Such was the height of the walls of Jericho. On the other side of the double wall, the embankment continued to climb upwards. The third tier was at the very top of the embankment, where yet another mud-brick wall stood.

At their base, the [walls of Jericho](#) stood 46 feet (14m) above ground level outside the retaining wall. To the Israelites below, Jericho seemed impenetrable.

The illusion created by the two walls on the bottom, and the large wall at the crest of the embankment, seemed to stand nearly 10 stories in height from ground level! From this height, the Israelites must have seemed like ants, and surely were deemed no threat whatsoever.

God's strange strategy continued. Joshua was told to march around the city once a day for six days. Armed men lead the way and were followed by seven priests, each blowing a ram's horn as they marched. They were followed by those carrying the ark of the covenant. The final group was an armed military group protecting the rear of the procession.

God was extremely specific with Joshua, as crazy as the strategy would have seem to Israel, and Joshua responded with the same extreme obedience.

What do we learn from this? God is once again teaching us to trust Him instead of using our own ingenuity, resources, and intelligence. As we further study the taking of the Promised Land, we will see that Joshua, who was a genius in battle, could have made a swift attack on a petrified Jericho and probably would have won. But God had other plans!

All throughout scripture we see God "marching to the beat of His own drum." Noah built an ark to prepare for a potential disaster – when such disasters were unknown. God used a talking donkey to do his will. God kept taking men away from Gideon's army in the face of insurmountable forces – and they won with shouting, torches, and pottery. The world doesn't understand God's ways! Paul tells us:

***22 It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. 23 So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.***

***24 But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.***

God pairing down Gideon's army was an object lesson to keep Gideon and his men from thinking it was through their might that they would defeat the enemy. God's whole motive is to keep us humble so that we always recognize our need for Him! Gideon had thirty-two thousand men originally and God showed him what He could do with 300.

God's strangest strategy was found in the incarnation and the cross of Christ. Rome was known for their warfare, their conquests. They had taken over the Greek empire and was the last empire to rule the known world. Then enter a seemingly backwater, blue collar, unimpressive couple sporting a seemingly illegitimate pregnancy. Rather than lay siege to the Roman empire and call down the might of Heaven, Jesus lived a nomadic life of ministry and preaching. Through parables and examples, he taught a different way to live and carried out a strategic plan to draw people back to their Heavenly Father.

The ultimate impossibility was God becoming man, carrying a cross, taking on the sins of the world, rising from the dead, offering forgiveness and new beginnings. God has a way of turning everything upside down!

Time and time again the declaration of God, offered through the prophet Zechariah resounds:

**Then he said to me, “This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. (Zech. 4:6).**

It is easy to give God worship! We can learn to quote the right verses, pray the right prayers, and sing the appropriate songs, but the catch is to move from being a worshipper to being an obedient follower!

It didn’t matter to Joshua that God had some strange strategy for him to follow – what mattered to Joshua was that when God say “Do! Go! Follow!” When God appeared, Joshua fell down and worshipped him! But then Joshua listened to God’s instructions and then he obeyed! Once God revealed his instructions and desires, there was nothing more for Joshua to do but obey!

Where are you today in your life! Can you truly say that you are prepared to obey God regardless of the instructions – or are you still tempted to argue with God. Scripture clearly shows us that God allows us to ask questions. God listens to our fears and understands our hesitations. But God has the final word, and are we alright and ready to admit that God knows best?

So many times God has to teach us lessons of humility to remind us that he, in fact, is God, and we need to let him be God!

Are you living in disobedience and claiming to be a follower of Jesus? If you are, you are flirting with disaster. Even today, a soldier who refuses to follow orders are punished by a court martial and pays the price.

Too many churches, leaders, and congregation members today are trying to make Jesus “more acceptable” to the world rather than tell the world they need to conform to Jesus! A huge area of disobedience is in the area

of our sexual relationships. Those relationships, which are blessing from God, are reserved for a covenant relationship that we call marriage. We are told to abstain from premarital or extramarital sexual relationships if we are believers yet there are those who call themselves followers, pastors, leaders, and scholars who come up with shrewd reasonings and justifications that try to prove God's teachings are out of date or unreasonable in today's world. Does God know best?

As you strive to live a godly life that is growing each day, ask yourself what Jericho do you face? Make a physical list and be honest about the temptations in your life. What are your spiritual struggles? What are your doubts? Do you really believe that God knows best! Do you truly believe that God wants you to live a godly life, that might mean giving up things you really want to participate in, out of complete love for you? Or do you think that God's rules (notice I didn't say man-made religious rules) are purely to kill the fun that you could possibly have?

What do you truly need to give over to God? Bitterness? Unforgiving spirit? Resentment towards someone you trusted and you feel they have betrayed you? Are you struggling because of loss, addictions, emotional confusion?

Ask yourself is you are allowing God to conquer your Jerichos for you! Obedience to Jesus is not a "get out of struggle" free card. You are probably going to be called on to do a lot of work – work that you are scared to undertake.

The story of the Battle of Jericho reminds us that when we are obedient to God – God goes before us and grants us victories. He is cleverer than we are. He is stronger than we are? Are we willing to trust God as we live our lives and allow Him to take us forward – even when the world cannot comprehend the strategy?

Hebrew 11 sums it up over and over with the reoccurring phrase "By faith..." Let's close with the reminder of what faith in God can accomplish with the ending of the great "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11...

***<sup>30</sup> It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.***

***<sup>31</sup> It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.***

***<sup>32</sup> How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. <sup>33</sup> By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. <sup>35</sup> Women received their loved ones back again from death.***

***But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. <sup>37</sup> Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. <sup>38</sup> They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.***

***<sup>39</sup> All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. <sup>40</sup> For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.* Let's pray together...**