

## Victory of the Lamb – July 29, 2018 – Unshakeable

### Are Your Sure, God? – Joshua 6:1-21a – Pastor Bill Limmer

One of my summer jobs was working at San Juan Lutheran Church in El Paso Texas. I did everything from VBS to maintenance. One of the tasks I was given was knock down an old adobe house on the property. It was a small house probably about 1000 sq. feet. The adobe bricks were about 18 inches long, 12 inches high and 12 inches wide. The project managers, i.e. my father and one of the missionaries, the sophists that they were reasoned that this job could be concluded in about a week. My teenage mind questioned their wisdom. Are you sure? But I was up for the challenge, or at least I thought I was. I was given different sized sledgehammers including one that probably weighed fifty pounds. I thought it was going to be neat to see the walls come tumbling down. On day one, it was a typical summer El Paso day, sunny, hot, and windy. None of that really matter until after about two hours of pounding away on this building I had exactly zero adobe stones down on the ground. So I went to 7/11 for a big gulp. After being refreshed by my coke. I went back at it. For about 10 more minutes. The stones weren't moving. And I was getting frustrated. So I went on to other things, with the house mocking me in the background. Later that night I went back, it was near dusk and I started pounding away again. But this time there was actually a little movement from the stones. One stone went down. How cool was that! Then a second stone went down. But that wasn't so great. Because that stone actually landed on a water line protruding from the house and broke the water line. Water was shooting all over the place. Wall 1 Bill O. So I am wondering whether you are a long time Christian or whether you are a first-time guest just checking out Christianity or somewhere in between - do you have a wall in your life?

I want to share with you are true historical account. Joshua 6 **Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.** The nation of Israel has finally crossed the Jordan. They are ready to claim for themselves the Silicon Valley of the day for them that meant a land that flowed with milk and honey. However, just for a moment, try to put yourself into the shoes of the average Israelite soldier. For most of these men, Jericho was the first city they had ever seen that was surrounded by huge protecting walls. And likely that was a ditch built around this wall too to make the access to the city even more difficult. There are varying estimates about how big these walls were but if we say 20 feet tall and 3 feet thick we are going to be in the ball park. It must have looked like and absolute impossibility. As the soldiers looked up, they must have thought, "are your sure, God? Why did you put us here, God?"

It was December 14, 2012 when Daniel Barden awoke early and reveled in the extra time he had to cuddle with his father before he had to go to school. The seven-year-old goofed around on the living room couch with his dad, Mark. Through a silhouette of bare trees, the dark sky outside their Newtown, Connecticut, home turned red-orange. Christmas tree lights, reflected on the window, dotted the sunrise. "Isn't that beautiful?" little Daniel asked his father, who captured the moment in a photo before walking his son to the school bus. Normally Daniel and his dad would play tag on the way to school bus but his dad asked, "can we just hold hands today?" And so they did. Some of you will recall that December 14, 2012 was the day of the Sandy Hook school massacre. Daniel was one of those students who were murdered. Mark says he struggles every day with the loss of his son. "It's always constantly in my mind," "It's just constant torment that my little boy is gone and there's no escaping that." What wall is in your life? The Wall is the place where the pain of heartbreak or confusion hits with sudden and sharp force that you feel crushed, like giving up. Your world is rocked. Maybe the wall that is in your life is family trouble that is tearing at your heart and is leaving you wondering what to do about your spouse, child, sibling. Maybe your wall is that your Tinder account is getting any real notice. Maybe

there is a work wall with a project, or boss, or coworker. Maybe the wall you have is an addiction. Maybe there is a financial wall between your bank account and your bills. Or it is a struggle with a particular sin that surrounds your heart. And so people think you have one kind of character and integrity but you leading a double life. Do you have a wall that is causing you to wonder, shout, cry, ask are you for real God? Is there a wall or two that is causing you to ask Why?

With this huge wall in front of them: **(Then) the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.** God promises victory and deliverance before they have ever lifted a sword, an arrow, before they ever placed a ramp up against that city wall. God lets them know the conclusion before they ever enter the battle.

God has promises for you and me too. And he is calling each one of us to have faith in these promises. As we face the walls in our own lives, whatever they may be, we can go in confidence not because we are going to knock down the wall but because God is going to take care of us whether the wall is knocked down or not. We need to not consider the size of the wall as much as we consider the size of God. Isaiah 43:1-3 **But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. <sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;** Notice God didn't say he was going to keep the waters and the fires away from us. But that when we go through the waters and the flames he will be with us. He is promising us the victory and telling us the outcome before we get going. "Our vision is so limited we can hardly imagine a love that does not show itself in protection from suffering. The love of God is of a different nature altogether. It does not hate tragedy. It never denies reality. It stands in the very teeth of suffering." – Elisabeth Elliot. Though we may suffer for our discipleship to Christ, he is always with us.

Here is the battle plan to conquer Jericho: **<sup>3</sup> March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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."** Really. This sounds ridiculous. Here we are in enemy territory. They hate our guts. They know we want their city. Our lives are a stake. It was a plan that, from a purely human and military standpoint made no sense at all. They were tempted to fight, to do it their way. Are you sure God? So they walked. The people of Jericho were ready to fight but weren't going to leave the security of the wall behind. They probably thought this new nation was a bunch of pansies. They were walking around trying to get enough courage to fight. Yet, when they did it God's way, it worked.

As we face the walls in our lives, we need to take God at His Word and trust Him for our victories too! Romans 4:21 **being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.** (2 Co 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.) Jesus did not save us for us to be defeated! He saved us for the victory and He will be there all the way to help us secure it for His glory! Will there be trials? Yes, but there will also be victory. A lot of times we may think we need to do something big but God may just be asking to do something small. We may want to beat that wall down all on our own but God has his way that often looks like this: **'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,'** says the Lord Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

And so Israel went into battle with a partner, God. He was in absolute control of the battle, He was leading them, and He was the guarantee of their victory! As we face the obstacles of our lives...It is a

blessing to know that we do not have to face them alone... Or in our own strength. No obstacle is insurmountable as long as we face it in the Lord!

Here is the rest of the account: Joshua 6:6-21 **So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it."**

**<sup>7</sup> And he ordered the army, "Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD."**

**<sup>8</sup> When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the LORD went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the LORD's covenant followed them. <sup>9</sup> The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. <sup>10</sup> But Joshua had commanded the army, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" <sup>11</sup> So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.**

**<sup>12</sup> Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding. <sup>14</sup> So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. <sup>15</sup> On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. <sup>16</sup> The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! . . . <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> They devoted the city to the LORD.**

We live in a time space stations zooming across our skylines. We live in time of apps for this that and the other thing. We live in a time when youtube can teach us just about anything. We live in a time of medical advancements that were previously unthought of are not everyday occurrences. We live in a time of judgmentalism – don't judge me because if you do I will certainly judge you, if I am not already doing it. We live in a time when people think they can conquer anything with enough time, resources, and talent. But we live in a time, as people have, ever since the fall, of sin. Sin is not defeated because people don't want to call it sin or think it is old fashioned. The wall of sin in not conquered by our good works but the perfect work of our Savior in our place. Death is not conquered by the fountain of youth, medicine or exercise or the power of positive thinking but by something scandalous, the cross of Jesus and a tomb that is empty no matter how many times you look inside. Sin is not conquered by our good works. You see it is not through our fighting that we receive victory but through God fighting for us. It is Jesus through Jesus wounds, we are healed. His suffering and death in our place means we can trust him in our difficulties. It is by grace you have been saved through faith not by works.

Where do we go when we have these walls of trouble in our lives? To God. James 4:8 **Come near to God and he will come near to you.** And we find God most clearly today in Word and Sacrament. Yep just reading his word. It is even easier than walking around Jericho blowing trumpets. Yep baptism, simple water connected with the powerful Word. Way easier than walking around Jericho. Yep, the Lord's Supper. A little cup and wafer, the celebration of real presence, instead of walking around Jericho just walking up to the front. And the victory, way greater than Jericho' walls coming tumbling down. The victory is the crushing of sin, death and Satan not by us but by Jesus. The victory is our by grace through faith. God still listens to our prayers. God is still a miracle working God! Greater than any obstacle, able to move any mountain, stronger than any wall we might face. And . . . God is sure!

