



Three weeks ago when we read Joshua 3-4, we learned how God's people can experience victory when facing an overwhelming obstacle. Remember, God's people were facing the raging, flooded Jordan River and they needed to get across it. Today's passage of scripture in Joshua 6 could be seen as a similar theme as God's people are facing another obstacle: the challenge to conquer their first city in the Promised Land—Jericho. Jericho is a heavily fortified walled city and the Israelites don't have the military muscle to defeat this city.

But the theme for today goes beyond facing overwhelming obstacles. The Big Idea for today is this: God's supernatural methods bring His supernatural results.

If you are seeking to experience God's supernatural results in your life, Joshua 6 shows three Supernatural Methods for us to follow:

- Utter Dependence on God
- Obedience
- Continued Obedience

Utter Dependence on God

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

Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, 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."

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." And he ordered the army, "Advance! March around the city with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD."

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. 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. 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!" 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 (verses 1-11).

On Day 2 they repeated a one-lap march—trumpets blasted, the army was silent, they returned to camp. They're told to "march" around the city. They're told to blow the trumpets. There are seven mentions of the trumpets in these opening 11 verses. The ram's horn (or shofar) produced piercing blasts that symbolized an alarm of impending attack or war. They're told to be silent: Don't give a war cry, don't raise your voices, don't say a word until Joshua says, "I tell you to shout."

This battle plan makes no sense. General George S. Patton said, "A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week." The Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest had one battle strategy: "Get there first with the most men." One element of victorious military strategy includes surprise. God seems to be working exactly opposite of all military strategy!

Why would God, who knows everything, defy worldly logic with his attack strategy? There must be a reason. God always does things with a reason. How many times have you wondered, why is God defying logic with this situation in my life?

Let's think about the two main groups of people in this situation: The people inside Jericho and the Israelites. For the people in Jericho the accumulative effect of the marching around the city, the ram's horns blasting, and the silent army was God's obvious intention to get the attention of every single person inside Jericho. God is giving the people in Jericho a final chance to stop living in rebellion against Him and acknowledge Him as the one True God like Rahab acknowledged God. "*... the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below*" (Josh. 2:11). God wanted the inhabitants of Jericho to live in Utter Dependence on Him by repenting of their wickedness and acknowledging God.

Let's think about the Israelites. This couldn't have been easy for them. Marching with trumpets blowing and their silence was the equivalent of them saying, "here we come! ... no, we're just faking. Here we come! ... no, we're just faking." They walked back to their camp. God was teaching His people that Utter

Dependence on His plan is always best, so trust Him, regardless of what circumstances reveal.

To illustrate this, Tom White comes to mind. Tom felt like God was leading him to share the love of God to the people of Cuba. So, there's the instruction from the Lord. There was a huge problem. Tom couldn't get into Cuba and didn't know anyone in Cuba. But he could fly an airplane. His idea was to load Gospel tracts into his plane, fly at low altitude over the island and drop them out.

Does that seem like a good plan to anyone? I hope not, because it's not a good plan! But as Tom was living in Utter Dependence on God, he felt like this was the Lord's leading. And he did it on three separate trips. The supernatural result was thousands of people picking up the tracts and giving their hearts to Jesus and a book written about Tom's experience called *Missiles over Cuba*. The most harrowing part of his story was his crash landing and imprisonment as a CIA operative.

It doesn't matter what time period a person lives in—ancient Israel or today—in order to experience God's supernatural results you have to live in Utter Dependence on God.

Obedience to God was their second behavior that allowed them to experience God's supernatural results. Think about it: Every detail of the march, their daily return to camp, the silent vigil and the blowing of the trumpets was obeyed. It's through obedience to God that a person shows that they utterly depended on Him. The two are inescapably connected.

What do you think most honors God and which God most delights to honor? James Boice, pastor and author answers: "Is it an eloquent profession of faith? No. Many have called Jesus "Lord, Lord" but have later fallen away. Is it the exercise of great natural abilities? No. There are many who have had great abilities but have squandered them on worthless ends. Is it an attractive appearance or personality? No. Saul stood head and shoulders above his countrymen, but he finished his life badly.

"The true answer to the question is found in Samuel's words to Saul after he had sinned by failing to obey God. God instructed Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites but he kept a few choice items. Saul pleaded that he had almost entirely destroyed them and that he had spared what he did, only to make sacrifices to God. Samuel and God had no interest in Saul's rationalization. Under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Samuel declared, *'Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams'*" (1 Sam. 15:22)."

Because of Saul's disobedience in this situation, God said, "you will no longer be the king of my people. I can't use someone who won't obey me." How sad. As I think about Saul, I don't think, "man, what an idiot that guy was." I think, "God, help me. I'd rather trust what I can see and I so quickly question your invisible

hand of providence. God help me to obey you and live in Utter Dependence on You." Consider God's posture. He is ready and delighted to use people who will trust Him and obey His plans, step by step. The Israelites are doing exactly that as they march around Jericho.

Obedience

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 (v. 15).

For 6 days they circled this 8-acre military base. It was roughly 400 yards long, 200 yards wide, and 70 yards high. It sat on top of a pear-shaped mound. At 750 feet below sea level, it was typically a brutally hot climate. The walls were at least 6 feet wide, more likely 12 feet wide. During the 6 days of circling the city, the Israelites would have endured the taunts of the people as they stood on top of the walls.

If you read this chapter carefully, you'll notice that Joshua never tells the people how many times or days they would circle the city, nor what would happen on Day 7. Let that sink in. Try to put yourself into the sandals of one of those Israelites. All Joshua and God were telling you was: one day at a time!

Despite a lack of full information, despite the ridicule they'd have endured from the inhabitants of Jericho, despite the heat, despite the lack of seemingly sanctified wisdom, they Continued to be Obedient. God delights to use people like this. After they'd marched around the city seven times...

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. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys (verses 20-21).

Continued Obedience

Consider the Continued Obedience here. After the walls fell down, they charged into the city, killed the inhabitants and animals. This wasn't normal. But God had specific reasons for it in this small period of time. Let me explain with a four-minute sidebar explanation on God's method of warfare.

People are given a chance to repent. The people of Jericho have been given the same opportunity to repent as Rahab but they have refused. The inhabitants of Jericho and Canaan were melting in fear because of the power and holiness of the Lord. Although they knew and saw the Lord's character and power, they wouldn't submit to the Lord. After years of increasing wickedness, the time of judgment has come.

Normally, the army takes prisoners and bounty. In regions that weren't the Promised Land, God instructed the Israelites, *"When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace"* (Deut. 20:10). If they accepted this offer of peace, everyone was spared. If they refused, they would fight and the men would be killed.

But in the Promised Land purity is emphasized. Later it says, *"However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God"* (Deut. 20:16-18).

God changed His warfare tactics in the Promised Land because He wanted to protect His people from idolatry and apostasy in their homeland. God didn't want His people to be contaminated with the terrible practices of the Canaanites who practiced sexual perversion of prostitutes in the worship of Ashthoreth, sacrifice of children to the god Molech, and the use of magic and sorcery.

What we see in Jericho is a special case of divine judgment. Judgment is always God's last resort. David Howard says this, "We should note that the instructions to Israel to annihilate the Canaanites were specific in time, intent, and geography, that is, Israel was not given a blanket permission to do the same to any peoples they encountered, at any time or in any place. It was limited to the crucial time when Israel was just establishing itself as a theocracy under God to protect Israel's worship, as well as to punish these specific peoples."

For a deeper and more exhaustive explanation on the war practices of Israel in the Promised Land, go to the church's website and listen to the teaching of Josh Butler. Josh was our special guest two weeks ago and he spoke on this exact topic.

Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house. But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day (verses 24-25).

Consider the Continued Obedience here. They burned the city instead of placing some men there as a rear guard. They collected the valuable items and put them into God's treasury – oh wait – someone decides he doesn't want to Continue in Obedience at this point. Achan took some jewels and we'll learn of the tragic consequences of that next week. But other than Achan, the people Continue in Obedience and give God all of the valuable stuff. They spared Rahab and her family, like they'd promised.

Many generations later, Jesus Christ would be born from her bloodline. Incredible and completely unexpected!

Through this sequence of events we see that God is holy and won't tolerate sin. And God is also gracious and loving in ways that will destroy our boundaries. The conquering of the city of Jericho was a supernatural act of God. It's incredible. The people of God got to experience God's supernatural result by trusting in His supernatural methods. Today, God invites us to experience His supernatural results too. That happens as we live in Utter Dependence and Obedience.

There are three implications and applications for us:

- The discipline of silence is one way to live in Utter Dependence on God.
- Seeing God's presence should boost your confidence to trust God.
- God will use obedient people.

The discipline of silence is one way to live in Utter Dependence on God. The Israelites were silent as they circled Jericho. Why? God's Word reveals that we hear God's voice best when we remain silent. Moses said, *"The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace"* (Ex. 14:14). The Psalmist says it this way, *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge"* (Psalm 46:10-11). Luis Palau says, "What a rare commodity! How difficult this is to achieve. If we're not speaking verbally, then there are a thousand mental voices inside our thoughts, each vying for the last word. Listen to God? How can he possibly get a word in edgewise? This passage seems to be saying, 'Hush. Don't talk so much. Be quiet before the Lord after you've poured out your heart to him. Let God speak.'"

Seeing God's presence should boost your confidence to trust God. Joshua and his people had faith and believed God because they recognized that He was right there with them. The Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence and power, is mentioned eight times in this chapter. It's at the center of the procession around the wall. The great promise of the book of Joshua—we've said this every week—is God with us. This was God's fight, not Joshua's. God is the hero of the story, not Joshua. The destruction of Jericho is done by God and for God. There really wasn't even a battle to be fought.

This is why there is such an emphasis on the number seven in this chapter.

- Seven priests
- Seven trumpets
- Seven days of marching
- Seven times around the city on the seventh day
- Seven represents completeness or perfection

With the physical presence of the Ark and the recurring use of 7's, God is saying, "I am here."

Do you see God's presence in your life? He gives you a morning and evening reminder with beautiful sunrises and sunsets. He gives you a personal love letter and guidebook to life—His Word. He surrounds you with people to encourage you. If you are a follower of Jesus, He has placed His Spirit inside your heart to give you everything you need. He is your Good Shepherd. Are you recognizing His activity in your life? When you do, it should boost your confidence to live in obedience to Him.

The third implication and application for us is that God will use obedient people. In fact, He delights to use people who are obedient to Him. Are you living in obedience to God? Or are there some areas where you're making some compromises? We can easily give our reasons and our justifications for the compromises. But God sees right through us and He calls us out. God is looking for men and women who will live in obedience to Him, people who will trust His supernatural methods so that He can bring His supernatural results to the world.

What I'm describing here is the life of faith. Each of you are facing something that questions and challenges your utter dependence and obedience. That's why it's called a life of faith. As an individual or as a family, I urge you to quiet your heart and hear the voice of the Lord today. What is He saying to you?

As a church, as we heard last week, we are facing some big changes that will challenge us:

- The North Campus will be stepping out to become an independent church in one year.
- The South Campus is actively looking for its own full-time facility.
- There's a plan to launch a San Mateo campus in a few years.
- We continue to shine the light of Christ in one of the darkest spiritual places in our nation.

All of this will challenge our utter dependence and obedience. Let's be people who display God's glory by our obedience.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.