

INI - SDG

8th Sunday a. Trinity

August 14, 2011

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

Series: Joshua 07

Text: Joshua 6 - ***Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. 2 And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor. 3 "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. 4 "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 "It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him." 6 Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD."***

12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13 Then seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually and blew with the trumpets. And the armed men went before them. But the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the priests continued blowing the trumpets. 14 And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days. 15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times. 16 And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city! 17 "Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18 "And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19 "But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. 21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. 22 But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." 23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. 24 But they burned the city and all that was in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the

vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Theme: **JERICHO: A PREVIEW OF THE END**

- God's "foolish" plan of victory
- Utter destruction
- Salvation for God's precious possessions

Dear fellow sinners made righteous in the blood of the Lamb, God's own Son, Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed,

If you've rented DVD movie releases recently you've probably noticed a clever scheme that the movie makers have come up with recently. It used to be that when you rented a DVD, if you didn't want to watch all the previews at the beginning of the movie you could just press the "SKIP" button to skip through them. The producers of DVD's must have realized that people weren't watching their previews any more, so many have programmed DVD's such that you HAVE to watch the previews.

Why is that? Why do movie makers want you to watch previews of other movies before you watch the movie you paid to see? Well, they are hoping that their previews will get your interest and you will want to give them more of your money in the future so you can see their movie. Unfortunately, many of us have had the sad experience of the movie preview being better than the movie itself!

Throughout Scripture, God gives us previews of things that are to come. The book of Revelation is a preview of things that would happen to the church throughout the centuries. While there are some scary images in the book of Revelation, in the end the Lamb - Jesus - wins. In our on going series from the book of Joshua, we find another preview as we hear about the victory and destruction of Jericho. With Jericho we find a preview of the End of the World. As we examine this preview we will be reminded of God's "foolish" plan of victory, the utter destruction that will come at the End, and the salvation of God's precious possessions.

GOD'S "FOOLISH" PLAN OF VICTORY

The first preview of the end we see with Jericho is God's "foolish" plan of victory. Is it odd to hear of anything God does as being "foolish," isn't it? When we speak of the plans of God, we usually speak of His infinite wisdom - and for good reason! He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He created all the laws of physics, the universe and the seasons. He created us! We are fearfully and wonderfully made! How could we, the creature, ever think of describing anything our Creator does as being "foolish"?!

Yet when you hear of the battle plans the LORD has drawn up for an attack on Jericho, it sounds foolish. Imagine being a soldier in the army, about to attack your first city and hearing these battle plans: have the army march around the city walls of Jericho once every day for six days, bring the ark of the covenant with you, say nothing - let the only sound be that of the seven ram's horns blown by the seven priests. On the seventh day, march around the city walls seven times, again saying nothing - the only sound coming from their marching feet and the seven ram's horns being blown by the seven priests. But on the seventh time around

the city walls on the seventh day, when the people hear the rams horns sound, then shout with a great shout. Then, the LORD said, ***“the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.”*** (v.5)

This sounds like a foolish battle plan, doesn't it? If our commander in chief sent our soldiers into battle with a ram's horn and bible, giving them the same directions he would probably be impeached. Yet what do we find happening in our text? God says it, General Joshua relays the order to the army of Israel and the army follows these “foolish” plans. The result? Verse 20, ***“And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.”*** God miraculously caused the walls of the city to fall flat and He gave the Children of Israel the victory over Jericho.

For those who have a child-like faith in the promise of God, such a battle plan does not sound foolish at all. We don't hear of anyone questioning Joshua's orders. In fact, for six days the people march silently around Jericho. They had faith in the so-called “foolish” plan of God and God gave them the victory. In Hebrews 11:30 we read, ***“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.”***

In this preview of the end we are reminded of God's “foolish” plan of victory for us. Paul writes to the Corinthians that ***“the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** (1 Cor 1:18) The Gospel, the good news about Jesus dying on a cursed cross to save sinners, is just as foolish to the unbeliever as trying to defeat a city by shouting at its walls. The unbeliever thinks it is foolish to put your trust in someone who died 2000 years ago to be saved. The unbeliever thinks it is foolish that you cannot do anything to save yourself, that only God can save you and give you the victory.

But to you who have been brought to faith, the message of the cross is not a foolish plan of victory, it is your only hope. The Gospel is the power of God to rescue you from your sins. By faith you know that you can do nothing to save yourself your sins, only God can do that. And you rejoice in this “foolish” plan, because it means God gives you the victory in Jesus Christ and in the End will grant you eternal life as His free gift through Jesus. Just as He gave the Children of Israel the victory over Jericho through His “foolish” plan.

UTTER DESTRUCTION

The next preview we have of the End we find is what happened to that wicked city of Jericho. Once the walls came tumbling down, we read in verse 21 that ***“the utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.”*** And verse 24, ***“They burned the city and all that was in it with fire.”*** To our politically correct ears, this is a little unsettling to hear. Everyone in the city of Jericho is utterly destroyed? Men and women, young and old? Everything but those precious possessions which we will talk about shortly, was destroyed?

Make no mistake about it, this was a judgment from God against the people of Jericho. Jericho, which means something like “moon god,” was a center of pagan worship for many false gods. It is believed that their pagan worship involved child sacrifices and ritual prostitution. In His infinite wisdom He had determined their time of grace had come to an end, just as He determines the end of the time of grace for all people - young and old alike.

The utter destruction of Jericho is a preview of the utter destruction of the world that will take place at the End of the World. We heard Peter remind us in our New Testament Lesson (2 Pt 3:10) that ***“the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”*** When Jesus returns on the Last Day, He will separate the believers from the unbelievers. The believers will be welcomed to the inheritance of grace which Jesus has prepared for them in heaven, while the unbelievers will be condemned to an eternal death in the fires of hell.

Then, Peter tells us that this world and everything in it will be utterly destroyed. EVERYTHING will melt with a fervent heat. The tall sky-scrapers, the family farm, the mountains - everything will be burned up. Peter says that if such an utter destruction awaits this world and everything in it, ***“what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?”*** (11-12) We work hard not to accumulate stuff for ourselves (stuff that will be utterly destroyed), but to glorify the God who saved us. So in the utter destruction of Jericho we see a preview of the End of the World and remind ourselves that all our possessions will be destroyed on the Last Day.

SALVATION FOR GOD’S PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS

Not everything was utterly destroyed in Jericho, though, was it? In verse 19 we read that the silver, gold, bronze, and iron were to be collected from the city and put in the LORD’s treasury - as a sort of offering to the LORD. Over 400 years later, these items would later be used by Solomon in the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. These precious possessions were to be rescued from the destruction of Jericho.

But that was not the only thing that was rescued from the destruction. Verse 17, ***“Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.”*** There was something in Jericho that was even more precious to the LORD than that silver and gold - there were believing souls. Believing souls that had earlier protected the Israelite spies, when they were spying out Jericho. Believing Rahab was saved from the destruction of Jericho, along with her family. After being rescued Rahab lived among the Israelites, even going on to marry an Israelite man. Rahab was the great-great grandmother of King David. And from the descendants of Rahab would eventually come our Savior, Jesus.

This too is a preview of the End of the World. This precious possession was saved from the utter destruction of Jericho. We read in Hebrews 11, ***“By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.”*** (v.31) Rahab was a believer. We see her faith in her works, that she received those Israelite spies with peace and protected them from the soldiers of Jericho. God saved this precious possession, one of His believers, from the utter destruction.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we too have been rescued from the utter destruction on the last day and the eternal destruction of hell. We are just as undeserving as Rahab. Remember, she was a prostitute, a woman of sin. Yet God called her to repentance and faith in Him. Her sins were forgiven for Jesus’ sake. It is the same with us! We are men and women of sin. God has called us to repentance - to turn away from those sins - and turn to Jesus in faith for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus suffered the wrath of God for the sins of Rahab and for

the sins of each one of us. He did this to rescue us from the utter destruction at the End of the World. God has called us out from the destruction and made us His people, just as He did with Rahab the prostitute. This is salvation by grace - undeserved salvation - for Jesus' sake!

So when we read Joshua chapter 6 and hear about the destruction of Jericho, we see a preview of the End of the World. We see what the world would call a "foolish" plan of victory through the message of the cross of Jesus Christ. We see the utter destruction of Jericho and we are reminded of the utter destruction that awaits this world. And we see how God saved His precious possessions from destruction, just as through faith in Jesus we are His own precious possessions for whom His Son died and are rescued from the destruction to come. May God ever keep us steadfast in this faith unto the end and by His eternal grace, give us that crown of life in the end. All praise be to our Savior God! Amen!