

Just Before the Battle

by Warren Wiersbe

Joshua learned that he was not alone, second in command, on holy ground, and that he had already won the battle through God's battle plan.

Duration: 33:35

Scripture: Genesis 39:4, Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:13 - 6:5, 1 Samuel 17:34-36, Nehemiah 1:11, Luke 16:10

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Joshua and his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua made four important discoveries that night. Firstly, he realized that he was not alone in his leadership role, highlighting the loneliness that often comes with leadership. Secondly, Joshua recognized that he was standing on holy ground, emphasizing the sacredness of his encounter with God. Thirdly, Joshua encountered the captain of the Lord's host, who assured him of victory over Jericho. Lastly, the preacher mentions the story of David, who also discovered that he had already won the battle before it even began. The sermon encourages listeners to trust in God's promises and to overcome worry and frustration.

Transcript

Joshua chapter 5, and I'm going to read verses 13 through 6, 5. Joshua chapter 5 verse 13. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel, none went out and none came in.

And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho and its king, and the mighty men of valor. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of ram's horns. And the seventh day, that's the big day, ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets, and it shall

come to pass that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him. We need to appreciate the fact that Joshua was not in an easy situation.

We sing about Joshua, we hear him sung about, we read this, we remember this story from our childhood, but Joshua was not in an easy situation. Just consider some of his difficulties. Difficulty number one, he was the new leader.

People don't like to follow a new leader. Difficulty number two, the old leader had been with them for many years, and he had done some great and wonderful things, awfully hard to follow in the footsteps of Moses. Difficulty number three, the Jewish people were not known for their faith.

In fact, God had spent a whole year, a whole 40 years, wiping out the old generation and bringing in the new. God had said, don't trust anybody over 20, and he wiped out the older generation, took the younger generation, built a new nation, but they were known for their unbelief. Difficulty number four, here was this great city of Jericho, a fortress with wide walls, strong armies.

Now, I know down through those years, Israel had seen God do some great things, and God had taken Israel and led them through that river and brought them right up to Jericho. But if you were to stand there and look at that city, you would say it cannot be done. I say it again, Joshua was not in an easy situation.

Joshua was a human being, a man of like feelings, such as we are. He was a believer, a great believer, but he was human. And I can just see him that night before, as he's out checking everything out, and he turns the corner and he meets this man, a sword in his hand.

See, Joshua knew that Joshua's biggest trouble was not Jericho, his biggest problem was not Israel, Joshua's biggest problem was Joshua. We have a group of new students who have come to Chicago, and before long, some of them are going to be saying, I cannot be a good student this city, or I can't be a good Christian this neighborhood, or I can't do this, this school. Or you may pick out a vulnerable member of the faculty or the administration, say as long as she's here, as long as he's here, I can't do the thing I should do.

We like to put blame on somebody else. And Joshua could have said, oh, the city is too big for me, I'm following this great man Moses, what do you expect out of me? I'm not a Moses. But Joshua knew that Joshua's biggest problem was himself, and your biggest problem is yourself.

Mr. Moody said one day, I have more trouble with D.L. Moody than with anybody else. So God had to do something for Joshua, and God has to do something for me and for you. We face impossible situations.

Somebody's come to Chicago to go to school, and you don't have enough money in that bank account really to take care of all your needs right now, and you say it can't be done, but it can. Someone says that I have an impossible city before me, the walls are too big for me, and the enemy is too great for me, it can't be done, but it can be done. History is written by people who said, oh yes, it can be done.

But you've got to win the battle down on the inside first. Now that night, Joshua met Jesus Christ. The captain of the hosts of the Lord is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

And as Joshua turned the corner, he stood before the Lord Jesus Christ, then he fell before him, and that was the turning point. You see, Joshua made four discoveries that night, and if you and I will make these same four discoveries, those walls will come down that stand between you and victory. If you and I will make these same four discoveries, we'll be able to face any enemy in the will of God and see God give the victory.

Now what are these four discoveries that Joshua made that night? Discovery number one, he discovered that he was not alone. Did you ever stop to think of the loneliness of leadership? It's so easy for me to page through Time Magazine or U.S. News or Newsweek and then close them and say, oh, our president, the loneliness of leadership. He needs my prayers.

It's so easy for church members to look at the man in the pulpit and say, well, our pastor, the loneliness of leadership. I want to read some quotations to you. Listen to this.

I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. To remain as I am is impossible.

I must die or be better. You know who said that? Abraham Lincoln. The loneliness of leadership.

Listen to this. It is an awful thing to be president of the United States. It means giving up nearly everything that one holds dear.

The presidency becomes a barrier between a man and his wife and between a man and his children. Woodrow Wilson wrote that. Listen to this.

To be president of the United States is to be lonely, very lonely at times of great decisions. Harry Truman wrote that, the man who pushed the button that dropped the atomic bomb. What a decision that was.

You see, for those of us who are followers, it's easy to be critical. But for those who are leaders, there is that loneliness of leadership. And Joshua looked out and he saw soldiers, some of whom could die.

He saw women who were saying, will our husbands be alive at the end of this next week? He saw little children who were wondering, will our fathers perish in the war? And he had decisions to make. And nothing makes you lonelier than making decisions when you're the only one who can make those decisions. And then he turned the corner and he discovered he wasn't alone, that Jesus Christ was right there with him.

And oh, what a tremendous discovery that was. Now the Lord had promised to be with Joshua. Let's look at something interesting.

Go back to Joshua 1, verse 5. God said to Joshua, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. The secret of Moses' life was not Moses, it was God.

Now he repeats this in verse 9. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee wherever thou goest. Chapter 1, verse 16.

The people wanted God to be with Joshua. Look how they prayed. Verse 16.

They answered Joshua saying, all that thou commandest us we will do, and wherever thou sendest us we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee. Only the Lord thy God be with thee as he was with Moses.

What an encouragement to a leader to have his people praying, oh God be with him. Now the enemy even knew that God was with Joshua. In chapter 2, Rahab told those spies, we know that God is with you.

In chapter 3 of Joshua, Joshua says to the children of Israel in verse 10, hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you. And he names all the enemies. So they say to Joshua, God be with you.

God says to Joshua, I am with you. Joshua says to the people, the Lord is with us. But you know friends, you can say all of this and read all of this, but until you experience it in your own life.

It's just so many words. And God had to do with Joshua what he had to do with Abraham, what he had to do with Joseph, what he had to do with Jacob, what he had to do with Moses, what he had to do with David. He had to get him off by himself.

And he had to bring him to that place where there was only Joshua and God. And when Joshua turned that corner, he discovered he was not alone. That the Lord Jesus Christ was right there with him.

And would you notice something interesting? The Lord came to Joshua in exactly the form he needed him. He came to him as a soldier. Now when the Lord came to Abraham, he didn't come to Abraham as a soldier.

Abraham was a pilgrim. And Jesus came to Abraham in Genesis 18 as a pilgrim. If he had shown up as a soldier, that wouldn't have worked.

He came as a pilgrim. When the Lord Jesus was in the fiery furnace with those three Hebrew children, he came as one of them. He always comes to you when you need him, where you need him, in the way that you need him.

And there are going to be days, there might even be weeks, when the devil is going to say to you, you're all alone. God's forsaken you. Why if the Lord is with you, why did this happen? And why did that happen? And why do you feel like this? And you remember this, you are not alone.

We are never alone because the same God who promised Joshua promised us, I will never leave you nor forsake you. No matter how you feel, you're not alone. No matter what you see, you're not alone.

No matter what's going on around you, you're not alone. Jesus Christ is with us on the field of battle and Jesus Christ is with us in the furnace and Jesus Christ is with us when we go through the flood and the fire. Fear thou not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God.

He discovered he was not alone. Now that night he made a second discovery. He discovered that he was second in command.

As Joshua walked through the camp, all of his officers bowed down. Our great leader. There goes Joshua.

As Joshua would walk through the camp, the little children would come out and they'd kind of hide behind their mother's skirts and they'd watch. They'd say, there goes Joshua, the great man. But when Joshua

met the Lord Jesus Christ that night, Joshua discovered something.

He discovered he was second in command. I like the way he stepped out and said, are you for us or against us? I like a man who sees things in a clear cut way. Jesus said, if you're not for me, you're against me.

Choose you this day whom you will serve. You know, Joshua had all of the ingredients necessary for success. He had been born a slave in Egypt.

He knew what it was to suffer. He had gone through the Red Sea. He had seen God perform great, great victories.

Joshua had taken the sword and gone out and fought with the Amalekites. Joshua had experience. Joshua knew how to obey.

He was Moses' servant for all of those years. Joshua had skill. Joshua had courage.

Joshua had faith. Joshua had patience. But all of those things by themselves or together do not mean success.

I've been preaching long enough in this country to know that it's not enough to have faith and courage and talent and experience. Greater men of God than this preacher who's standing here have gone down in defeat. And let him that thinketh, he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.

What is the one thing Joshua needed above and beyond this? He had to learn that he was second in command. And Jesus said, I've not come for or against. I've come as the captain.

And Joshua said, it's my Lord. And he fell down before Him. Have you ever done that? Who's in command in your life? Now Joshua knew how important it was to be second in command.

His predecessor Moses had fouled things up when he thought he was first in command. When Moses took his sword one day in Egypt and he killed an Egyptian, buried him. And he thought that by his hand God would deliver the people of Israel from Egypt.

And God said, Moses, it's not by your hand, it's by my hand. And it's not by your sword, it's by a shepherd's rod. And Moses, you have graduated with all the honors from the Egyptian schools.

Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt. But there was one more lesson Moses had to learn. He had to learn he was second in command.

It took him forty years of shepherding to learn that. You find any failure in the Bible and you'll find somebody who didn't know he was second in command. Jacob, it took Jacob years to learn he was second in command, that God was first.

Saul, King Saul never did learn he was second in command. And he died a failure, a suicide on the field of battle. For three years the Apostle Peter wanted to be first in command.

Who's going to be the greatest? And one day he had to learn that he was second in command. That's what Joshua learned that night. And he bowed down before the Lord Jesus Christ.

He worshiped and he said those magnificent words, what saith my Lord to his servant? I'm the servant, you're the Lord. I'm opening my ear to you now. What are you saying to me? Do you do that in the morning? When you get up in the morning, do you pick up your Bible and do you say what saith my Lord to his servant? He'll tell you.

If you'll just admit that you're second in command. Well, here are two discoveries he made. He discovered, first of all, he wasn't alone.

He discovered secondly that he was second in command and bowed down before the Lord in surrender and in submission. Now the third discovery he made, he discovered he was on holy ground. The Lord said to him, take off your shoe.

You're on holy ground. Now Moses had had that experience. Moses was leading his sheep out in the pasture land.

I have never felt that where sheep walked, it was holy ground. But there appeared that bush that was burning and Moses looked at the bush that was burning and God spoke from the bush that was burning and God said, take off your shoes. You're on holy ground.

This is pasture land. It's holy ground. Wherever God is talking to his servant and wherever his servant is worshiping and yielding, that's holy ground.

Do you want to know where you're going to start falling apart spiritually? It's when you start building a wall in your life between the secular and the sacred. Now this part of my life is just everyday life. It's secular life.

This part over here, this is sacred. And so when I cross, there's a little gate in here. When I walk through this gate and walk from the secular into the sacred, I'm going to be spiritual.

But when I walk through the little gate from the sacred into the secular, I'll just be ordinary. There is no such thing in the Bible as secular and sacred. Wherever the child of God is doing the will of God, that's holy ground.

You might be sitting in the cab of a great big truck, tailgating somebody. If you're doing what you're doing to the glory of God, you're on holy ground. Tuesday you may go off to your office and sit at a typewriter, and you have pounded those same keys day after day, and it seems very ordinary.

If you're serving God, if you're doing what you're doing to the glory of God, you're on holy ground. You might put yourself on one of those little roller things and slide yourself under a car and look at Greece all morning. But if what you're doing, you're doing to the glory of God, you're on holy ground.

And the minute any one of us says, now this area of my life is sacred, this area is secular, we're giving the devil a place to move in. Because whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do it all to the glory of God. There is no such thing in our lives as secular and sacred, spiritual and material.

It's all God. And God said you're standing on holy ground, and Joshua could have said, but Lord, this is pagan ground. Don't you know where we are? We are in the land of Canaan.

Here is the filthy city of Jericho. It's godless, it's horrible. Holy ground? And Jesus Christ would have answered and said, Joshua, wherever your foot of faith walks, that's holy ground.

And as you walk these streets of Chicago, as I have for the past seven years, or as you drive the streets of Chicago, remember this, wherever the child of God is serving the Lord for the glory of God, in the will of God, that's holy ground. And I'll tell you, friend, when you know you're standing on holy ground, nothing's going to move you. You know what it does for you when you know that wherever you walk in the will of God, it's holy ground? It builds integrity into your life.

It builds character. You don't use one part of your life for the secular and one part of your life for the sacred. You're always standing on holy ground.

And if you find you're not on holy ground, then you're out of the will of God. You know what it means when you're standing on holy ground? It means that no task is too small. The first thing God asked Joshua to do was not to defeat the city.

The first thing God asked him to do was take his shoes off. You're standing on holy ground. Put off your shoe.

I'm a general. Put off your shoe. Oh, Lord, haven't you got some big thing for me to do? I do, but let's start with this.

Put off your shoe. There's some saint here tonight who says, well, I'm waiting for God to ask me to do some big thing. I got news for you.

He won't ask you. Do you ever notice in your Bible how God starts people out on little things? Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things.

I'll make you ruler over many things. David started out killing a lion and a bear, not a giant. Nehemiah started out taking care of the kitchen, not the whole city.

Joseph started out keeping track of the credit cards of his boss, not running the whole country. And somebody here tonight who is not faithful in the little thing, the meeting of a deadline, the fulfilling of an assignment, the paying of a bill, some little thing, you wonder why God won't trust you with the big thing? I'll tell you why. Jesus said, he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greatest.

He discovered he was on holy ground. Now he made a fourth discovery that night. He discovered he was not alone.

That encouraged him. He discovered he was second in command. That encouraged him.

He discovered he was on holy ground. That encouraged him. And then he discovered he had already won the battle.

It's unfortunate that when our chapters and verses were divided that the division was put at the end of verse 15 because verse 1 of chapter 6 ought to be verse 16 of chapter 5. It goes all the way down to verse 5. After Joshua fell before the feet of the Lord, then the Lord spoke to him. The Lord said, now Joshua, I have a battle plan. I'm not expecting you to invent anything.

Dear friends, when the child of God is in the will of God, you don't have to manufacture anything. He hands it down to you. You see, I've got decisions to make.

Then get before the Lord, be second in command. He'll give you the wisdom to make the decisions. And the Lord Jesus said to Joshua, verse 2, I have, ye shall.

Notice that? Verse 2, I have. Verse 3, ye shall. That's the Christian life.

I have, you shall. I have already done this, you shall do this. I have done that, you shall do that.

That's the whole Christian life. The Lord didn't say to Joshua, now Joshua, for the last 40 years you've been a soldier and you've seen the way I've done some battles. Now go on in there and do it the best you can.

Oh no. No, no. The Lord said, I know that Jericho is tightly shut up.

Nobody comes out. Nobody goes in. I know that humanly speaking you can't get to first base.

But I have already won the battle. I know exactly how it's going to be done. I have, you shall.

Now that's the Christian life. A Christian is not someone who muddles through somehow. A Christian is not someone who gets up in the morning and says, well, somehow I guess I'll make it.

A Christian is one who gets up in the morning and says, father, what have you already done for me today? Now give me the faith to step out and lay hold of it. That's the Christian life. It's the God who goes before us.

God had already gone before. God had already prepared the way. God already had the plan.

All Joshua had to do was step out by faith. He discovered he had already won the battle. This was true of Gideon.

Even though Gideon was a man of weak faith and he had to test God out, he discovered he'd already won the battle. So down he went with his 300 and they won the battle. That's what David discovered.

David came back home one day and discovered that all of his family and all of the families of all of his men had been kidnapped. And he said, Lord, what shall I do? They're going to stone me. And God told him what to do.

And he went out and he won the battle. Why? He'd already won it. I'm talking to somebody here now who is worrying.

You're worrying about something coming up this next week or a month from now. You're frustrated. It keeps you awake at night.

You keep with it long enough, you'll have an ulcer. And I want you to know that when the child of God is in the will of God, the future is already taken care of. That's the meaning of that word providence.

Pro, beforehand. Video, to see. To see beforehand.

That's what Abraham discovered. We're going to call the name of this place Jehovah-Jireh. The Lord will see to it.

He discovered he had already won the battle. Well, the rest was just a matter of faithful obedience. He communicated with his leaders.

They communicated with the soldiers. They began to march around the city. And you recall on that seventh day, there was a tremendous victory.

But that victory wasn't won on the battlefield. That victory was won when the general got alone with God and made those discoveries. He discovered he wasn't alone.

And if God before us, who can be against us? He discovered that he was second in command. He discovered as he knelt before the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was on holy ground. And he discovered he'd already won the battle.

The battle is still the Lord's. When the child of God is in the will of God, and he is serving to the glory of God, he's going to win. And so whatever Jericho you're facing this week, don't be afraid.

Just get off with the Lord and make these same discoveries personally. You've read about them now in the book. Make them personal in your own life.

And like Joshua, you're going to move out and you're going to win the battle. For if God before us, who can be against us? Let's pray together. Thank you, Father, that you don't push us out on the battlefields of life and abandon us.

Thank you that we don't have to struggle and muddle our way through limping in defeat. Thank you we can stand by faith and face the future no matter what it may be. And with assurance know that you are with us and for us.

Father, we have no problem believing that you are for us. Our problem is that sometimes we are not for you. We become selfish and worldly and sinful.

And we hear the word of God saying, who is on the Lord's side? I pray for that one here tonight who wants to be first in command. Perhaps the experience has been rich. Perhaps the past victories have been great and there's a tendency to pride.

Oh God, may that one realize that we are all second in command. Help us to stay low before you, Lord Jesus, knowing that we win the battle standing because we have been kneeling. And grant that someone here tonight shall go away with new courage and new determination and new victory.

I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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