

# Sermon Outline

**“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”:**  
A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

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## **THREE LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY** (JOSHUA 6:8-14)

### **I. The Church Militant**

### **II. A Review of Joshua 6:1-7**

- A. Joshua 6 records the Jericho campaign.
- B. In 6:1-7, we find the Lord’s instructions regarding Israel’s capture of Jericho.
  - 1. The Lord told Joshua that he had given Jericho into Israel’s hands (6:2).
  - 2. The Lord said that Israel is to march around Jericho for seven days.
    - a. On the first six days, Israel is to march once around the city on each day (6:6).
    - b. When Israel marches, the procession would comprise the following:
      - i. Seven priests to carry trumpets of ram’s horns in front of the Ark of the Covenant.
      - ii. Priests to bear the Ark of the Covenant
      - iii. The soldiers, the “armed men,” marching in front of the priests.
    - c. On the seventh day itself, Israel is to make seven rounds around the city (6:4).
      - i. Upon the completion of the seventh round, the priests will blow their trumpets.
      - ii. At that point, the Lord God himself would bring down the walls of Jericho, and allow Israel to rush in to take the city.
- C. The use of priests and religious symbolism in the procession is interesting.
  - 1. Israel’s war against Jericho is not merely military, but also religious and theological—it is itself an act of service to the Lord God.
  - 2. The frequent use of the number seven—seven days, seven priests, seven trumpets—in the schedule and order of the procession may be God’s way of teaching Israel that this war with Jericho is part of a larger battle for the salvation of the world.
  - 3. The fall of Jericho is meant to be a foretaste of the great Day of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:8).

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the main event in Joshua 6? (2) What was the subject matter in Joshua 6:1-7? (3) What does the use of priests and religious symbolism in the military procession teach us about the nature of Israel’s campaign against Jericho? (4) What does the fall of Jericho symbolize?

### III. The March Begins (Joshua 6:8-9)

- A. In 6:8, the procession of priests begins.
  - 1. Israel is obedient to the Lord's appointed leader. "And just as Joshua had commanded the people..."
  - 2. The seven priests with the trumpets march in front of the Ark of the Covenant—they are heralds of the great Lord.
  
- B. In 6:9, our attention is drawn to the soldiers themselves: "The armed men were walking before the priests...and the rear guard was walking after the ark..."
  - 1. The soldiers were split into two groups.
    - a. There were those who were marching in front of the priests.
    - b. There were those who marched behind the Ark.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What begins in 6:8? (2) What is the function of the seven priests with the trumpets? (3) According to 6:9, how were the armed men divided?

### IV. The Rule of Silence (Joshua 6:10)

- A. But Joshua had an additional instruction for the troops: "You shall not shout or make your voice heard...until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout" (v 10).
  
- B. Whether this rule came from the Lord or from Joshua alone is not clear.—But either way, Joshua has spoken and so Israel has to obey.
  
- C. But why this rule of silence?
  - 1. No clear explanation is given in the text itself.
  - 2. We are left to do some intelligent guesswork.
  - 3. Some may say that Joshua did not want the Israelites to attract the enemies' attention.  
—But if stealth was what Joshua was aiming for, he would have stopped the priests from blowing their trumpets (see vv 9, 13)!
  - 4. It is likely that Joshua did not want any talk amongst his soldiers, because he did not want any kind of demoralizing speech coming from anyone.
    - a. Joshua knows that marching around the city for six days could be intimidating for the soldiers.
    - b. Joshua still remembered how his fellow Israelite soldiers discouraged one another from taking the land in Numbers 13:31, 32.
    - c. Joshua realizes that if discouragement sets in, the soldiers could shrink back from what God had called them to do.
    - d. So, to prevent any discouraging speech, Joshua decides to impose a code of silence on the soldiers.

**\*Questions for reflection:** Why did Joshua impose his rule of silence on the Israelite soldiers? Why is stealth not a possible reason?

## V. The End of the First Day (Joshua 6:11)

A. In verse 11:

1. “So he caused the ark of the LORD to circle the city, going about it once....”
2. “...they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.”

B. So far, so good!

**\*Question for reflection:** According to verse 11, what happened on the first day of the march?

## VI. The Rest of the Week (Joshua 6:12-14)

A. The same thing happens on the second day: “Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.”

B. The priests did their work:

1. “And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD walked on, and they blew the trumpets continually.”
2. Once again, this was not a quiet, stealthy operation!

C. The soldiers also did their work:

—“And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the LORD...”

D. Again, the day ends seemingly without event: “And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp” (v 14).

E. Israel repeated this schedule for the rest of the week: “So they did for six days.”

—Israel was constant in her obedience!

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What did the priests and the armed men do on the second day? Did they do anything differently than the first day? (2) What does the phrase, “So they did for six days,” tell us about Israel’s conduct? How faithful was Israel to God’s orders?

## VII. Three Important Lessons for the Church Militant

Having read about the Church’s conduct during the six days of the campaign—and the six days are symbolic of our present age—there are at

**least three lessons that our heavenly Father would want us to learn from this instance. First, the Lord God himself marches with his children today. Second, you and I need to keep proclaiming God, and not allow evil speech to destroy the morale and faith of our fellow Christians. Third, you and I need to keep on marching faithfully for Christ, especially since we know that the great Seventh Day is coming.**

A. The first lesson: *The Lord God himself marches with his Church today.*

—His holy, royal, sanctifying, and God-centering presence is with us today, just as it was with our Israelite fathers and mothers so many years ago.

1. How do we know that this is so (since we don't have the Ark of the Covenant with us anymore)?
  - a. The Lord Jesus himself said so: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
  - b. In this passage, the Lord Jesus is speaking as...
    - i. the new prophet-leader of God's people (Joshua's supreme successor)
    - ii. the Lord God of Israel himself
  - c. Jesus' community of disciples is the new Israel of God.
  - d. When Jesus promises that he will be with us forever, it's similar to how God promised Joshua and Israel that his presence will go with them.  
—Matthew 28:20 is similar to Joshua 1:9.
2. The Lord Jesus is with us in the person of his Holy Spirit.
  - a. The new "Ark of the Covenant" comprises...
    - i. the Holy Scriptures
    - ii. the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Table
    - iii. the Church itself (1 Cor 6:19)
  - b. When we draw near to God through these means, God will draw near to us in his holy, God-centering power.
3. God is with his Church today, just as he was with his Church of yesterday.
  - a. We may not "feel" God's presence in spectacular ways.
  - b. But we do not need to *feel* anything to *know* that God is with us.  
—The reality of God's presence is not determined by what we feel, but by what God himself has promised!

B. The second lesson: *Since God is with us, we need to continually proclaim the Word of God, and not allow any kind of evil speech to destroy the morale and the faith of our fellow Christians.*

1. We get this from the fact that Joshua imposed a rule of silence on the soldiers, while allowing the priestly trumpets to continue sounding.

2. While there is no rule of absolute silence for Christians, there are principles in this text for us to heed.
  - a. By calling the people to be silent, Joshua is making clear that the trumpets proclaiming God’s presence are to be the only “voice” that is heard.
 

—Therefore, it is not ultimately our words or our voices that the world must hear; but it must hear the Word of God.
  - b. This is what Colossians 3:16-17 teaches: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another...”
    - i. The Christian Community is the priestly Community of the Word of Christ.
    - ii. Everything we do either flows out from the Word, or else supports our ministry of the Word.
  
3. But for the Word of Christ to come through clearly from our lives, there are some kinds of words that we need to guard against. These include...
  - a. Those words that *demoralize*; that call God’s promises to us into question. Examples include:
    - “I don’t think that God loves me.”
    - “I’m not sure if I am really righteous in Jesus Christ.”
    - “I am still so filled with sin. How can God possibly love me?”
  - b. Those words that *secularize*; that call God’s rule of the world into question.
    - i. The message of worldly fulfilment: “Security and comfort in this world are my fulfilment.”
    - ii. The message of nationalism: “The glory of my nation is the highest goal of my existence.”
  
4. We need to resolve to speak and trumpet only the Word of God through our lives.
  - a. And what is that Word that people must hear?
    - i. YHWH God has come in Jesus Christ.
    - ii. He has died for the sins of his people.
    - iii. He has risen from the grave to ensure their salvation.
    - iv. Turn away from your sins, put your faith in Jesus Christ, and return to a life of holy service to God!
    - v. If you have put your faith in Christ, God already counts you as his own—don’t give up!
  - b. But if you won’t speak these words, you could at least keep quiet (Josh 6:10)
  
- C. The third lesson: *Since God is with us, we need to keep marching on—especially since we know that the Seventh Day is coming!*
  1. The seventh day is a symbol of the great Sabbath age to come; the full arrival of the new heavens and new earth, and the fall of the old world.

2. Just as God wanted the Church back then to keep the coming victory in mind, God wants us to do the same today.
3. We need to keep marching until we get there—God’s family has no quitters!
  - a. Each child of God should be a “good soldier of Christ” (1 Tim 2:3).
  - b. Christians embrace the best of military virtues—resilience, endurance, courage, and faithfulness to the cause.
4. But the only way to have these values is to keep the Goal in mind.
  - a. The Goal is the Sabbath Age.
  - b. ...and the Sabbath Age is the Kingdom of God...
  - c. ...and the Kingdom of God is in Jesus Christ!  
—The Goal is ultimately Christ Jesus himself!
5. So, to persevere in the faith, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus (Col 3:1-2).
  - a. The same Good News that saves us is the same Good News that sustains us.
  - b. If Satan can get you to look back on your own efforts, to obsess over how well or poorly you are doing, he can drag you down.
  - c. Draw your life from Jesus and encourage others to do the same (Jn 15:4).

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are three important lessons the Church can learn from the conduct of Israel’s priests and armed men? (2) How do we know that God is with us today, just as he was with the Church in Joshua’s day? What Scripture passages teach that God’s presence is with us now? (3) What is comparable to the Ark of the Covenant in the life of the Church today? (4) How do we demoralize our fellow Christians today? (5) How could we end up secularizing our fellow Christians? (6) Instead of demoralizing and secularizing speech, what kind of speech must God’s community give to the world and to one another? (7) Where do we find the strength to keep persevering in our Christian march?