

Message #1031
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"WHEN IN DOUBT...FOLLOW DIRECTIONS!"
{Joshua 5: 13-6: 20,27}

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INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome: "I planned many times to come to you {but have been prevented from doing so until now} in order that I might have a harvest among you...{but}...I have often been hindered from coming to you."
{15:22}

He wrote to the Thessalonians that he had an "intense longing" to visit them but was "stopped/hindered" from doing so {I Thessalonians 17b-18b}.

I have been earnestly praying concerning what God would have me say in worship each week, I pray the words of the Psalmist: "Show me YOUR ways, O Lord..." {Psalm 25:4a} and I've discovered anew that "He WILL teach us HIS ways, so that we may walk in HIS paths..." {Isaiah 2:4} I've had some intense conversations with God who has constantly reminded me: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways...My ways are higher than your ways...My thoughts than your thoughts." {Isaiah 55:8-9}

After these discussions I've come back to two verses that have sustained me for so many years in my ministry: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." {Proverbs 3:5-6}

You see, I've had a series of messages on my heart and mind that I planned to deliver; however, God had other plans. The Holy Spirit had other thoughts He wanted conveyed; therefore, I must obey the inner voice of God when I hear it and bring the message He wants delivered. For instance, today is Reformation Sunday. My plans were to talk about Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, Farel, and other Swiss Reformers; however, I heard God say loudly and clearly...

- ...talk about relationships
- ...talk about forgiveness
- ...talk about reconciliation
- ...talk about Me
- ...tell them of My holiness
- ...tell them of My glory

So, someday I will hopefully share more with you about those great leaders of the Reformation; however, today I want to talk about being in the presence of the Almighty.

"Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua went up to Him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?'

"'Neither,' He replied, 'but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.'
Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked Him, 'What message does my Lord have for His servant?'

"The commander of the Lord's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place

where you are standing is holy.'" {Joshua 5:13-15} "An angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up.'

"When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush--'Moses, Moses!'

"And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

"'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground!' Then He said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God." {Exodus 3:2-6}

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling one to another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory!'

"At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

"'Woe is me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and MY EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING, THE LORD ALMIGHTY!'

"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips: your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

"Then I heard a voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

"And I said, 'Here am I, send me!'" {Isaiah 6:1-8}

"TAKE OFF YOUR SANDALS, FOR THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY!"

If there's anything we've lost as the church of Christ it is reverence for the Almighty...

...the awesomeness of being in His presence

...the incredible holiness of God

We pray each Sunday: "Thine is the kingdom...and the power...and the GLORY...forever;" but, what is the glory of God?

...when was the last time you felt the glory of God?

...when did you last experience God's glory in your life?

...when were you last in His presence?

...when you knew He was there?

...when you felt that incredible awesomeness?

...when you heard Him say, "Be still...KNOW that I am God!"?

When was the last time you realized you were merely an instrument in His hands?

...so frequently we approach Him with such arrogance as if He owes us a favor

...we go to Him asking Him to sanction our blueprints not taking into account whether or not they are His plans

JOSHUA SURVEYS JERICHO

Following the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River Joshua told the people...

"The Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what He had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over. HE DID THIS SO THAT ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH MIGHT KNOW THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD IS POWERFUL AND SO THAT YOU MIGHT ALWAYS FEAR THE LORD YOUR GOD!" {Joshua 4:23-24}

...the hand of the Lord is powerful!
...always reverence the Lord your God!
The people of Israel camped at Gilgal while Joshua goes to the walls of Jericho surveying the land...gathering information about the city...and, preparing the battle plan to launch his attack.
...he needed a plan of action
...just how would they go about attacking Jericho
...their equipment was not adequate for such a challenge--swords, slings, and spears
So, here they were across the Jordan with the promised land of Canaan before them. Joshua must have felt the weight of the world pressing down on his shoulders!
JOSHUA NEEDED AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD...something was missing in his perspective and mindset...he needed to hear those words of encouragement again: "Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go!" {1:9}
...he needed to hear that voice that spoke to Moses from within the burning bush
...he needed to sense the presence of the Almighty
...he needed to remember that the battle was the Lord
...and he needed now more than ever to "trust in the Lord with all his heart, and not to lean on his own understanding/plans/strategy...and know that He would make his paths straight!" {Proverbs 3:5-6, paraphrased}

THE THEOPHANY

While assessing the situation, Joshua was confronted with a man standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand.
...he looked up {implying he had been looking down perhaps feeling the incredible weight of the responsibility upon his shoulders}
...he looked up and there was this man with sword drawn
The question he asked is quite natural: "Are you for us or for our enemies?"
President Lincoln made a significant remark to a clergyman in the early days of the Civil War.
The minister said: "Let us have faith, Mr. President, that the Lord is on our side in this great struggle."
Mr. Lincoln quietly answered: "I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right; but it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation may be on the Lord's side."
Joshua's question expresses his concern as well as his courage.
...all the Israelites were at camp in Gilgal
...since he is not one of ours, could he be the enemy?
...or was he someone who had come to help?
Joshua's question also reveals a typical mindset that poses a threat and a hindrance to our effectiveness as a Christian.
...we tend to see the battles we face as OUR battles
...the forces we face as forces marshaled against US...
...against OUR individual causes
...OUR concerns
...OUR agenda
Sometimes that may appear to be true; however, in another sense that is simply not true...and that is the issue here!

THE RESPONSE TO JOSHUA'S QUESTION

"Neither! But as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come!"

The man says he is not there to take sides...but, to take over and take charge as Commander of the Lord's army!
Two Principles Foundational for All of Life and Spiritual Warfare
Surface Principle One: It was not for Joshua to claim God's allegiance for HIS cause...no matter how right it might be!
...the need is to acknowledge God's claim over Joshua for God purposes
We tend to turn things all around...
...we try to marshal God to support US
...rather than to SUBMIT and FOLLOW Him!
It was imperative for Joshua--and for each one of us--to submit to God's authority--and LET GOD BE GOD!
...our orders are from HIM
...the battle is the Lords!
...He is the Supreme Commander!
Principle Two: As the one who had come to take charge; the Lord was reminding Joshua--and us--of both God's PERSONAL PRESENCE and His POWERFUL PROVISION!
...the provision of His vast hosts
...the promise of supplying all our needs!
The Commander of the Army of the Lord commanded the myriads of God's angelic forces who are always at God's bidding.
I remind you of that passage in II Kings 6:8-17 when Elisha was at Dothan with his young servant. He found himself surrounded by the army of Ben-Hadad.
That morning when Elisha's servant went out to draw water, he saw the vast army surrounding the city. Being fearful and greatly distressed, he cried out to Elisha, "What shall we do?" Elisha responded: "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them!" Elisha then prayed: "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see!" The Bible says that the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw...the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

THEY WERE NOT ALONE!

With them to fight was the vast host of God's angelic forces! I also remind you of that familiar scene found in Matthew 26:52-53.
Peter had drawn his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant...and Jesus responded: "Put your sword back in its place for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"
And, for your encouragement, I remind you of that incredible verse in Hebrews 1:14...
"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"
The message to Joshua is clear: the battle is the Lords...
...God is going to give you the land He promised
...all you have to do is follow directions

JOSHUA'S RESPONSE

"Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, 'What message does my Lord have for His servant?'"
Joshua got the message He remembered the words of Moses as they stood on the banks of the Red Sea: "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still!"
{Exodus 4:13}
What great comfort to know that we never bear our burdens alone...

...cast them on Him
...the battle is His

THE FINAL REVELATION

"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy!"

...removing the sandals was a sign of servanthood
...a show of respect
...submission
...worship!

Joshua was in the presence of the Logos...the Son of the living God...

...as were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace

Joshua realized he was in the awesome presence of the living God...

...he falls facedown
...he removes his sandals

CONCLUSION

How awesome the presence of the Almighty!

...God is HOLY

...and in His presence we can only say: "WOE IS ME!"

...in the face of God's perfection we become aware of our imperfections

...in light of His purity we are conscious of our impurity

...in light of His glory we see our own darkness

We need this morning the tongs to touch our mouths...our lips...to take away our guilt...

...to atone for our sin

...to make us clean

...only then can we be comfortable in His presence.

"Oh, the glory of Your presence.

We, Your temple, give You rev'ence."

Come, let us worship God!

...let's experience His presence....now!