

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
18th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, September 27, 2026
Scripture: Joshua 5: 13-15; Joshua 6: 12-20
Sermon: But God...Caused The Walls to Fall

It is a day that will go down in history. I know I was watching the T.V. closely. It was November 9, 1989- the day the Berlin Wall came down. It was the wall that divided the country of Germany. It was the wall that divided family and friends, the wall that kept the world out, and it was coming down, finally,

It is still hard to believe a wall could cause so much pain and death. Anyone who saw it knew of its destiny and death if they dared try to cross it.

The ominous silence that surrounded the wall turned into shouts of joy the day it came down. The obedience of not crossing it, not penetrating the wall all those years finally had turned into a victory celebration.

As we enter the book of Joshua this morning we pick up at the point of Joshua facing the walls of Jericho. Jericho was an obstacle at this point but no obstacle is too big for God.

Jericho was a military fortress built to defend the eastern approach to the high country. It could not be bypassed and conquering it was to be a challenge. Jericho's walls were high, its position advantageous. The walls were strong and the gates barred.

Aren't strong walls and gates in reality a witness to a sense of insecurity and mistrust of your neighbors. They are symbols not of strength but of weakness. Iron curtains, cement walls, barbed wire fences are not a sign of faith but a sign of fear.

Though Joshua is a history book its primary theme is the faithfulness of God as exhibited repeatedly through His presence, power, protection, provision and fulfilled promises. A secondary theme is the faithfulness of God's people. Their willingness to obey God would be tested and many times they failed the test. Yet God's faithfulness never ceased. The story of the walls of Jericho teaches us some important truths of following God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Some key points for us to look at are obedience, faith, and working together.

The story tells us how the people followed the commands of the Lord. Each day for six days they walked in silence around the watching city and on the seventh day they repeated this apparently futile exercise seven times. No one spoke. Can you imagine being quiet for that long?

Joshua commanded the people, “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!”

Can you imagine a large group of people moving in utter silence?

A book entitled: *Joshua: Man of Fearless Faith* written by Phillip Keller wrote, “Joshua has seldom been given the full credit he deserves as perhaps the greatest man of faith ever to set foot on the stage of human history. In fact, his entire brilliant career was a straightforward story of simply setting one foot after another in quiet compliance with the commands of God.”

Joshua was not perfect, nevertheless, obedience is the key to victory in God’s service, and Joshua is a prime example of this point.

What do you think the people were thinking? Probably they were thinking there is no possibility of conquering Jericho. Unless the God that delivered them from Egypt would again do the impossible. They had witnessed many God events but still had their doubts.

The mission seemed impossible but a mission with God in control became –Mission Possible.

The people needed to listen to Joshua and his instructions. They needed to be obedient and silent. They needed to trust in the Lord and his righteousness and they needed to work together as a team.

On the 7th circuit on the 7th day, when the city was entirely surrounded by the Jewish armies, Joshua commanded the people, at the sound of the rams horns long blow to: “Shout. For the Lord has given you the city.”

The people obeyed God and their Leader Joshua. The people shouted when it was time to shout, the walls collapsed so everyone charged in and took the city.”

The taking of Jericho was the result of an act of faith. Faithful obedience to the end and working together as a people of God.

Obedience is an essential part of true faith- which is why this event is recorded in the Book of Hebrews Chapter 11 with the list of all those who were faithful.

God honors obedience. Jesus was obedient- “He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.”

The people were given their instructions one day at a time and then went back to camp.

We want to rush ahead of God. We think we know what is best as individuals and as a church but God wants us to be still and listen for his instructions.

We want instant results—a drive thru theology to our problems where we tell God our order and at the next window we pick up our answers— neatly wrapped up.

We get frustrated and disappointed when God isn’t working at our pace. I know I do.

We can all learn from Joshua and this event in Jericho. To do what God wants us to do even though we don’t know the outcome.

Can you imagine being the people inside the walled city of Jericho? Thinking you are perfectly safe because you are on the inside. I’m sure the people inside Jericho laughed at the events happening around the massive city walls.

How could this obedience of the people circling around and around bring the walls down? Are they all crazy?

How could shouting and blowing trumpets bring down the fortress? They were all safe and secure on the inside of Jericho, right?

Many times in life we have a false sense of security, don’t we? We think that walls will keep us safe or living in the United States will keep us safe, or living in the right neighborhood, or having enough money or a good job then everything will be fine in life.

But sometimes life changes and things happen we don’t expect and the walls come tumbling down. All the tragic events of 9/11 remind us of that.

Where do you feel safe? Psalm 91 talks about the “safety of abiding in the presence of God.” Verses 1-2 “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’”

It is in his presence that we will feel safe and at home. God is telling us even the walls of Jericho couldn’t stop the power of God.

Jesus came to break down the walls that divide us and to build a bridge between God and us. Jesus calls us to break down the walls that we build within the church, community, friends, family and the world. So we can live obeying the will of God.

Walls separate us from each other, and walls separate us from trusting in the love of God.

Prayer breaks down walls and bridges begin to be built in our relationships with others and with God.

Once upon a time there were two brothers who lived on adjoining farms and they fell into conflict. It was the most serious argument they had had in 40 years of working together. It started with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference that followed with weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on the older brother's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox.

"I'm looking for a few days of work," he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there I could help with?"

"Yes," said the brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor, in fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bull dozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll do him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence, an 8 foot fence so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the posthole digger and I'll be able to do the job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town for the day so while he was gone the carpenter worked. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing and nailing.

About sunset then the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished the job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, and his jaw dropped.

There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge—a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other. A fine piece of work, handrails and all and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched.

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done." The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the

middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder.

"No wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," said the carpenter, "but I have many more bridges to build."

Like this carpenter let us also be bridge builders to bring the love of Jesus into people's lives.

The walls in our lives and in this world need to fall to the ground and bridges need to be built so that we can work together.

God helps us build bridges and tear down walls.

Prayer and obedience is an important element in building bridges.

The walls of Jericho fell by a divine act of God not by human effort, but by human obedience. May we be a people obedient and faithful, working together to cause the impossible to be possible through Jesus Christ our Lord.