**Who We Are: Where God Guides, He Provides**

**Text: Joshua 5:10 - 6:25**

**Big Idea:  Guiding and Providing -- Our side of the equation.**

**Ice Breaker:** What is the best sport ever? Make your case -- or make your case that sports in general aren’t interesting enough to talk about.

On Sunday, we looked into the book of Joshua to learn more about our 8th Point Church value: Where God Guides, He Provides. At the beginning of the book of Joshua, the Hebrews have come to the end of their 40-year wilderness trek, during which they had waited for God’s permission to move into the land that would become their new home. On Sunday, we saw them cross the Jordan River into Canaan, when God responded to their faith by stopping the flow of the flooding river. Next up, their first major battle in the conquest of Canaan -- taking the city of Jericho.

History and archeology tell us that while Jericho was an important city for trade and transportation (it was the southeastern “entrance” to the region west of the Jordan River), it wasn’t a large city. In fact, many of us live in subdivisions that are probably larger in acreage that Jericho. Jericho was built on a large mound of somewhere between 6 and 10 acres, with a population of perhaps 2000. But when the land around Jericho was threatened, a few more thousand would find protection within the city, because Jericho had one huge thing going for it -- a wall.

Actually, the “wall of Jericho” was TWO walls. The first was 15-20 feet tall and 6 feet thick, surrounding the base of the mound the city was built on, and had housing built both into it and against it on the inside. The inner wall, which circled the city proper on the upper part of the mound, was just as tall, but 8-12 feet thick, again with housing built into it and against it. [LEADER -- see further note below]

So even though Jericho wasn’t a LARGE city, it was a STRONG city, because getting past the wall was all but impossible. But Joshua knew that God had guided them here, and trusted that He had plans for providing what they needed. In this session, we’ll learn from Joshua how we live as though we really believe that “Where God Guides, He Provides.”

**(1) Acknowledge God’s Past Provision**

*Joshua 5:10-12 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. (11) The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. (12) The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.*

**Remembering the past became an excellent preparation of faith for the tests of the future.** The partaking of the Passover brought change; they ate of the food of the land, the manna ceased. The manna was to sustain them in their wilderness wanderings; the fruit of the land speaks of an actual participation in the promises of God. Passover not only looks back to what was accomplished but also looks forward to those things to come! For God’s covenant people, deliverance from Egypt included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance, a land of wheat, barley, fig trees, olive oil and honey (Deut. 8:8-9). It spoke of their new beginning, of their new life as the people of God delivered from judgment and rock solid in the place of blessing. The principle: the Passover not only looked back, but it looked forward to their new life in the land enjoying its abundant blessings by the power of God. Thus, eating of the produce was an act of confirmation of God’s abundant blessing. [Mike Hullah]

**Q: The Hebrews enjoyed a diet of nothing but manna (with the occasional quail thrown in) every day for FORTY years. On this day, the manna stopped, and they finally had something else. If you’ve ever been on a long, severely restricted diet, what was it like coming back to a wider choice of foods? (If you haven’t, what would you imagine it to be like?)**

**Q: Recall together some of the ways the Hebrews had seen God worked on their behalf in their history. Is there any reason they might now doubt that God would continue to provide what they most needed?**

**Q: Recall for the group some of the ways that God had worked on YOUR behalf. With that being true, why do WE so often doubt that God will continue to provide what he knows we most need?**

**(2) Understand God’s Presence and Purpose**

*Joshua 5:13-15 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?" (14) "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?" (15) The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

**(2a) God’s Presence -- “I am the support and the strength that you need.”**

“Now, the great significance of this vision that came to Joshua [Joshua 5:13-15] and which comes to us is the incomparable blessedness in the knowledge that if we have eyes to see, if we will lift our eyes to look, there, standing by our side, is the great Commander of the hosts of heaven and of God’s hosts in the earth. I do not have to be filled of anxiety or of needless care and worry. The commandment is not in me. It is in Him. And the leadership of the forces is not in us, it lies in Him. And He stands there with a sword unscabbarded, drawn unsheathed in His hand. We have no need to be filled with anxiety and care; we who are following the great Commander. It is only that we need to be careful that we are obeying His behest and His will and that He has priority and right in the leadership of the forces of God. It is He that makes the difference.” [W. A. Criswell]

**(2b) God’s Purpose -- “I am not here to take sides . . . I am here to take over!”**

“It sounds as if this person is saying that He’s not on anybody’s side. It’s more important that we’re on God’s side than that He’s on our side. Sometimes we head into a particular “fight”, and we ask God to join sides with us. God would rather that we be obedient to Him.” [Rich Cathers]

**Q:  As commanding general of the Hebrew army, Joshua was likely “near Jericho” to work out his plan of attack against this apparently impenetrable wall. Speculate as to what he must have been thinking.**

**Q:  We know that God had been directly communicating with Joshua since at least the death of Moses. Why would God have taken the further step to appear to him in this special way on this occasion?**

**Q: When asked whose side he was on, the commander of the army of God said, “Neither.” What should that tell us about assumptions we make on who God is for or against?**

**Q: As Christians, we love the last part of Romans 8, which begins, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Does Joshua’s encounter with God help or hurt our understanding of Romans 8?**

**(3) Follow God’s Guidance**

*Joshua 6:1-15 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. (2) Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. (3) March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. (4) Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. (5) When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in." (6) So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it." (7) And he ordered the army, "Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD." (8) When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the LORD went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the LORD's covenant followed them. (9) The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. (10) But Joshua had commanded the army, "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!" (11) So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there. (12) Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. (13) The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding. (14) So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. (15) On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times.*

**Why had they walked thirteen times around that place in silence?** I suggest it took that long for every one of them to realize that it was utterly impossible for them to capture Jericho if God were not with them – thirteen big long looks at the enemy, until they become convinced that they were no match for those behind the walls. God made the Israelites walk around the great fortification until within themselves they died to every hope of conquest unless God should intervene.

Is there a counterpart in our experience? You are conscious that God has brought you along in the Christian life and manifested Himself in blessing to you, but there is still the Jericho that haunts you: the Jericho within your human personality, or the Jericho outside.

The greatest difficulty in the Christian life is to get to the place where one is prepared to admit that the whole thing is too big for him, and that the power of the enemy is too great for him, and if his Jericho is to fall, then, somehow, God must bring it about. I believe that before God entrusts any of His people with a real measure of spiritual power, victory, and blessing, He brings them to a place from where they have surveyed [their] Jericho so long that they have come to see that its conquest is absolutely hopeless . . .So long as we think we can do it alone, the omnipotent resources of God in Jesus Christ our Risen Lord cannot help us. [Alan Redpath]

**Q: We sometimes think we can wall off certain areas of our life and not allow God admission. How do we try to create little “Jerichos” in our own heart where we don’t want God to penetrate?**

**Q: When you do that, is it more likely to be because you think not even God can help, or that, in some way, you really don’t WANT him to help -- because that would mean changing something about yourself?**

**Q: How do you know when you’re facing your impossible situations in your own power, rather than God’s?**

**Q: Many of the Hebrew soldiers may well have been thinking, “What in the world are we doing this for?” Have you ever had to take a step of faith that seemed odd at the time? Can you tell us about it?**

**(4) Watch God Work**

*Joshua 6:15-16,20,25 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. (16) The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! . . . (20) When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. . . (25) But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho--and she lives among the Israelites to this day.*

Now, it wasn't sound waves that knocked those walls down. The writer of Hebrews gives very clear commentary on the story: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days" (11:30). The apostle John expands the principle: "...And this is the victory that overcomes the world-our faith" (1 John 5:4). They walked around the walls by faith day after day. They had been given one demonstration after another that God's word and his power could be trusted. The Lord had opened the Red Sea, defeated the Egyptian army, kept them in the wilderness, opened the Jordan River, and brought his people safely into the Promised Land. How could they do anything else but believe him? Even though the plans didn't make a lot of sense to them, they could ultimately trust God. They expressed their faith by obeying the instructions that God had given to Joshua and to them. The priests, the people, and the army followed them completely. [Doug Goins]

**Q:  Why is the deliverance of Rahab and her family such a significant event? [LEADER -- because emphasizes that God fulfills his promises, even in “impossible” situations.]**

**Q: If God has knocked down walls to give you victory in certain areas, how did he do that?**

**Q: What would help you to develop trust that God is working even when what you're doing doesn't seem to be working?**

**NEXT STEPS:**

**1) Think honestly about and answer for yourself two questions: “Am I missing God’s provision today because I’m resisting God’s guidance in an important matter?” . . . and . . . “What am I trusting my own power for today, rather than trusting God’s provision?”**

**2) Discuss both questions (and your answers) with your spouse or closest Christian friend or fellow Core Group member.**