

Sun, stand still – July 20, 2014

Brief Intro of Myself – WLA Student Ministries

-Grateful for the Opportunity to preach this morning continuing our Joshua series that Pastor Jude has been leading us through over the last number of weeks

Summary: Up to this point...

-40 Years in Wilderness/ New Leader=Joshua replaced Moses

-Arrived at Canaan: the land promised to the Israelites by the Lord *reminding us of the faithfulness of God in keeping his promises not only to Israel's forefathers but to us as well*

-Miraculously crossing of the huge Jordan River –the Lord holds the water back - *reminding us that he is sovereign over His Creation – a truth that will all the more evident again from our passage today*

-Defeated the city of Jericho also by miraculous means – *reminding us again that it was only through God's Sovereignty and power that the Israelites were able to defeat the Canaanites*

-Setbacks of disobedience – Sin of Achan – loots a large sum of money and some forbidden devoted things of the Lord *teaching us that sin and disobedience is punished and disciplined by the Lord for His glory*

-Only after turning from their sin and punishing Achan for his disobedience they are restored back to the Lord

-Following this disobedience and restoration we read in Ch.8 how Joshua cleverly defeats another city called Ai by means of deception

-Ch 9 – Israel makes a covenant with the Gibeonites – a group of people who lived in Canaan but fooled the Israelites into thinking they were from a far off land

-The Lord listens to the prayers of his people – and we'll see how he answers in a miraculous way in our text today

This brings us to the 10th chapter of the book of Joshua, out of which we will get our key text this morning. And as we are reading...Here is what I want us to focus on as we continue the story of Joshua through a few questions that I want us to be honestly asking ourselves:

Are we following Joshua's example in his asking for the 'seemingly impossible'?

Are we consistently praying with great expectation and faith for the 'seemingly' impossible?

Are we expecting the Lord, the God and Creator of this Universe, to hear our specific prayers? Do we even believe that he is listening to us?

Our prayer lives lifeless and empty with no real expectation of a response from the Lord?

Through the study of this passage, and a few others:

I'm praying that we will go into the coming week with a new boldness and expectation that the Lord hears our prayers and acts on them in his perfect wisdom.

I'm hoping that we will see this new theme that the Lord is listening to the prayers of his people – and we'll see how he often answers in a miraculous way in our text today.

Let's turn to our reading for today: It will be up on the screen behind me but I want to encourage you to turn to it in your own Bibles as well, and jot down thoughts and ideas as we work through this passage.

-**CONTEXT:** 5 Kings native to the promised land have come together as a coalition and they are encamped against the Gibeonites – whom Israel had made a covenant with – the Gibeonites respond and the Israelites travel all through the night to their defence and strike them down in a decisive victory – and this is where we pick up the story

AS WE ARE READING:

-Notice the boldness with which Joshua speaks to the Lord

-Consider what actually happens as a result of his prayer

Slide(s) - Joshua 10:12-15 Be Interesting!

“At that time Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,

*“Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.”*

*And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
Until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.*

Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

So Joshua returned, and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal.

What do you see in this passage?

-An incredibly miraculous occurrence showing the power of the Lord!

-God caused the sun & moon to stand still - This is an unbelievable thing!

-the commonly-held view is that the Earth ceased to rotate for a time

so that the Israelites could achieve a greater victory over the coalition of 5 kings

Two striking feature of this passage:

The **Extraordinary answer** God gave to the **request of a man**.

-God interrupted the natural order of creation as a favor or a sign to his people, enabling and ensuring their victory

-Remember to the significance of this fact: This was a request that he made “in the sight of Israel” – he’s standing before his people making a request of the Lord that many of the Israelites might have said “You are really asking that?”

-If I’m standing before a large group of people that I’m leading and I’m making such a bold request of the Lord, I’m praying that with great faith that the Lord is going to answer this request, because I’m going to look quite foolish otherwise!

It was an incredible response the Lord gave to Joshua’s prayer!

Book of Jashar: 2 Sam 1:18 – we do not have a copy of this book, but it is a history book no longer in existence/ did not survive the passage of time – contained poetic accounts or songs of the deeds of heroes

-Shows that this event of sun standing still was recorded as fact elsewhere other than the Bible

However: Alternatives to Traditional Understanding:

Solar Eclipse/Poetic Imagery/Heat Diminished By Cloud Cover/Refraction of Light

- Natural explanations for this event don't fit the context of the story
- Considering the text says: "There has been no day like it before or since"
- ESV Study Notes say that it is a 'miracle of cosmic proportions!'
- Something miraculous has happened here that further proves the truth of the Sovereignty of God over his creation and his ability to answer prayer in ways that are beyond our understanding

Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still. What are you praying for?

Are we praying for things that we would only be able to accomplish with the Lord's power?

Prayer: Not a means of worldly gain...

- This is not about material acquisition/selfish ambition – new 2015 car/becoming rich/having more stuff
 - We need confidence in God's power – submission to His will – He knows best
- Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane praying: Our prayers should echo Jesus**
- Right before he was about to be subjected to a tortuous and cruel death
 - "Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." **Mark 14:36**
 - Remember: God is capable of granting any prayer, though we must be asking with the right motives
 - Ultimately God knows what is best for us, everything works together for our good
 - Let us keep this in mind as we move forward:

As soon I knew I would be preaching on this subject of praying with boldness, I knew I wanted to share a little personal example from my own life.

To me, in my own life,

Personal Example: 2006 – Had a good job in sales working for a company, I had my own company truck, making a good living.

- But I had a dream, and that dream was to travel around and play music.
- This was a dream that I remember having all the way back in high school – and going back and reading some of the thoughts and prayers that I wrote down during those days I realize now just how much I prayed for and desired this career in music
- Relying on such promises of God:

Matt 7:7 God wants to "give good things to those who ask him"

Luke 1:37 "Nothing is impossible with God"

- I made the prayerful decision to quit my job and join a band called Article One
- It was band in which all the members were Christians – we had a positive message and we wanted to go out and be a good example for the upcoming generation

Article One Album cover slide

- my boss at the time tried to convince me to do otherwise
- I'm sure that that dream caused my mother many sleepless nights
- Travelled playing music for 5 years – went to Australia twice – all around North America – hundreds and hundreds of shows for thousands and thousands of people

-were able to walk the Red Carpet at the Juno's in Vancouver (Absolutely no one knew who we were) right behind Michael Buble
-Recorded three albums over those 5 years – Met a lot of amazing people along the way
-I'm not trying to brag about my experiences- I'm humbled and grateful to have been able to be a part of it
-And I'll tell you it wasn't an easy decision – there was a huge element of taking a leap of faith in quitting my job and going out on the road – it was complicated!
But that experience proved to me exactly what we are studying this morning:
-God can do anything! If he can create a way for an ordinary guy like me to travel around the world and have some amazing experiences and meet incredible people while playing music that we were trying to glorify him with, than he truly can do anything!
-To me, it was a miraculous answer to a bold prayer
-Maybe not as miraculous as the sun standing still, but miraculous nevertheless
Article One CD's and T-Shirts will be for sale in the foyer afterwards.
Just Kidding.

GOSPEL:

You may be thinking: I'm not Joshua, I'm not a great leader who has been appointed a strong position like him. You may be sitting here this morning wondering if God hears your prayers at all! You may not feel worthy of coming before a Holy God. Well there is some great news for you to hear this morning.

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus Mark 10:46-52 –Where our Prayers should start:

-Jesus is coming out of Jericho (which is an interesting connection to the book of Joshua) with a huge crowd – Jesus is busy! He is active and energetic!
-Many people are vying for his attention
-He's on his way to Jerusalem, continuing his ministry along the way
-He has a great work to accomplish in Jerusalem – he is to be arrested, tried and convicted even though he is an innocent man
-He is to be crucified as a sacrifice for our sins
-He has eternally important and significant purposes while he is on earth
A blind beggar calls out to him – crying out for mercy
What does Jesus do? He stops! He stands still. The Son of God stands still to attend to this blind beggar.

Charles Spurgeon – English Preacher – Lived in the 1800's **Slide of Spurgeon**

-Preacher in London for 38 years, and lived until the age of 57 having preached to an estimated 10,000,000 over the course of his lifetime
-He is widely known as the Prince of Preachers for his mastery of the English language – and this is evident when you read of one of sermons

"I have heard of Joshua who said, "Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; and you, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon," but I rank the blind beggar *above* Joshua, for he causes the Sun of Righteousness to stand still! Yes, He who created both sun and moon stood still and the Lord listened to the voice of a man!"

Please insert blank slide here

- The plea of a blind beggar **made Jesus stand still –no less of a miracle**
- Our heart-felt pleas make Jesus stand still on our behalf – He listens to us!
- We need to see ourselves as the blind beggars that we are
- We come dressed in nice clothes here to church but until we make this same heartfelt cry to Jesus we are Spiritually blind and poor.
- We have nothing to bring to God, by default we are rebels against God
- it's only by his grace we can come before him
- Maybe this is you this morning – you haven't given much thought to who this person Jesus is – but remember this from this morning:
- even blind and beggars as we are – we see something in the character of Jesus here in this story of Bartimaeus
- Jesus listens to earnest prayer and cries of humility and repentance
- He came to into the world to seek and save the lost, and we humans fit that description before trusting in Christ
- So this is where your prayer life should start: “A cry to Jesus for his mercy, for his forgiveness, for his love to come flooding into your life”
- What can you be guaranteed? By no means will you be turned away
- To me this is more significant than any day that the sun stood still
- the sun of righteous stood still to listen the pleas of a blind beggar – just as he is the same yesterday, today and forever he would listen to your prayers for forgiveness and salvation even as you pray them this morning

Praying with great faith means to:

1) Pray for the seemingly impossible.

Lk 1:37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Eph. 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according the power at work within us,”

- Our spectrum of the ‘seemingly impossible’ is going to be large
- We all have situations that seem impossible -Relationship with the Lord/Eternal Life/Family/Friends
- Is what you are praying for something you can do in your own strength?

2) Praying with great expectation.

God can do this, God can do what you are asking for!

We pray with expectation and He does what's good and best for us and we live to see whether or not God will.

Joshua prayed with a boldness – an expectation that God would answer

Psalm 5:3 “O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I direct my prayer to you and watch.”

James 1:6-7 In asking for wisdom: “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;”

3) Praying while trusting in the promises of God.

Malachi 4:2 Judgment vs Salvation - ‘sun of righteousness’ Malachi 4:2

Hebrews 13:5

God is at work in the world with great acts of Judgement and great acts of Salvation

We need to take God at his word

Psalm 143:1

What is something that you can pray for that

Graham spoke a couple weeks ago on loving our neighbours – let's start praying for more opportunities to serve and love those around us

Loving God's Word -

What promises are we not laying hold of in our own lives?

Do we recognize the power we have through the Lord?

What happens when we pray for great revival in our own city? Country?

-Through the hustle and business of a Sunday morning here at WLA, we would realize that Jesus is waiting to hear our prayers

- slow down and use this next few minutes to pray boldly and believingly in the name of Jesus!

Ask yourself – what would happen if I prayed, with expectation, for the seemingly impossible?

Time spent in prayer during last worship song.

FIRE DRILL

Don't Say "May the Lord be with you."