

Sermon: Joshua and Jesus

Sunday 13 April 2014 Worship, Milson Church: Palm Sunday

Theme: We have the victory

Story of Joshua (Josh 6:1,6-16,20)

Verse for the day: Luke 19:39-40. Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Prayer for the day

Lord Jesus, make us your living stones. May every part of our lives cry out your praise. Break down the walls that keep us divided. Where there is suffering and fear, break through with a shout of joy! Amen.

Psalm: Superman Psalm (18D)

Bible reading: Luke 19:28-44

Psalm 18 Part D): The Superman Psalm verses 29-50

(For Palm Sunday)

Singlehanded I crush the enemy!
I leap high walls in a single bound
and outrun helicopters.
I bend machine guns with my bare hands
and bullets bounce off me.
When the enemy cried 'surrender'
I chased them, caught them, crushed them!
At the rumour of my arrival
triads and terrorists come cringing
to give themselves up.
At the news of my victories
all the world wants my photograph!

Ah, how we long for a hero!
This was exactly what they wanted in a Messiah.
Hosanna! they cried
And he betrayed their hopes,
him on a donkey.
How betrayed Judas felt.
How frustrated Peter was when Jesus talked yet again
about the cross -
Come on, Jesus, be the man we know you are!
Be a hero! Be superman!
"Get behind me Satan!" Jesus shouts in reply.

Great triumphs God gives to his king,
steadfast love he shows to his anointed.
But – ah – the pain before the victory ...
What blasphemy the crucified king!

Joshua children's talk

Once upon a time ... that's how all the best stories start isn't it?

Once upon a time the people of God were camping beside a river. Now I love camping beside a river, but the novelty does wear off after a while, and all you want to do is go home. The problem is, the people of God didn't have a home. They had had a home long long ago, but for hundreds of years they had lived in Egypt, and they had got trapped there in slavery. Then one mighty day they escaped, they ran for their lives, they ran into the desert ... then they got stuck in the desert, wandering around. One thing kept them alive and that was hope in God's promise ... God's promise that he was giving them their home back, their land, the Promised Land. And so they came right up to the edge of the promised land, and they stayed there for a while, looking at it longingly across the river. They got stuck there too, because their home land was now being controlled by people with swords and armies, who did not want to let the people of God back in!

The army base was in a city called Jericho.

The leader of the people of God was called Joshua

Joshua believed the promise of God, that this land was their home and God was giving it to them. But how? Jerico was impregnable. High walls protected it, with slots for archers to shoot arrows at anyone coming close. There was no way Joshua's people could possibly defeat it.

So while everyone was stuck by the river – so close and yet so far from home – God spoke to Joshua. And God said again what he had said to Moses, that this was the land promised to them. But How God? asked Joshua, and God gave Joshua a plan – it didn't sound like a very good plan when you said it out loud, but it was God's plan and so the people of God were willing to give it a go, or die trying.

Here was the plan ... they packed up all their stuff and they walked as close as they dared to Jericho – just outside of the range of the arrows! and camped there, terrified they would be attacked, but holding their courage and their swords close. And they prayed, they prayed really hard! Then bold as brass, in the morning, Joshua lead them on a march right around the city of Jericho. And here's the thing – they walked around in dead quiet. No one even whispered. Just solemn and slow, not even looking at the city, just walked all around it.

Then, they did the same thing the next day, and the next day, and the next – for 6 days.

I wonder what the people of Jericho thought looking out the window at them. What do you think?

Then on the 7th day, Joshua said 'Today is the day!' ... and that day they walked around the city not once but 7 times. Quietly, confidently, around and around And then, they stopped and stood in a big line and turned and looked at the city of Jericho, and all the people laughing at them from the windows ... and when Joshua said 'now' ... any idea what they did?

They shouted. They yelled as loud as they could possibly yell. And Joshua blew the trumpet as loud as he possibly could blow

I wonder what they shouted. It didn't matter what they said, it was just really loud. And at the sound of the shout, the earth shook beneath their feet, sharp, violent, the most powerful earthquake, that God sent just at that very moment, and the city of Jericho literally shook to pieces. The stones cracked and tumbled. The walls fell down!

And Joshua and his men rushed in and claimed the victory. They defeated the enemy army, and after that the people of God were able to make the land their home. They built houses and farms and places to worship God. They had a home. God kept his promise of a land and a home for his people.

The land is the nation of Israel.

And if you go there you can visit the ruins of ancient Jericho, where the walls came tumbling down.

Sing 'Joshua'

Today is Palm Sunday, the day when we remember another man entering another city – the day when Jesus came into Jerusalem. On that day the people of God shouted out loudly, and they perhaps remembered Joshua coming into the city of Jericho ... and the people wanted Jesus to be like Joshua, they wanted him to come in and defeat the enemy armies that controlled their homeland. In Jesus day the enemy army was Roman. But how the people longed to get rid of them and have their home back, and to not have to pay taxes to Rome and to not have Roman soldiers bossing them around all the time and doing terrible punishments to God's people, like killing people on crosses.

So when Jesus came into town that day they shouted and praised God and their hopes rose ... This was the Messiah, they said, He is come to save us! Hosanna, hosanna!

But Jesus didn't come with a trumpet, and he certainly didn't carry a sword. He didn't even ride in on a grand horse. He chose for himself a donkey to ride. ... and donkeys aren't very grand at all. A bit silly really, riding a donkey, just a young donkey too.

I wonder why he did that.

I wonder how you would have felt if you had been there.

I'm sure if he had wanted to he could have come in like Joshua, guns blazing with shouts of victory

He could have made the walls fall down and brought the Roman army to its knees.

Why do you think he didn't do that?

I wonder what he was telling everyone that day about who God is

Sing: I will enter his gates

Sermon

Today is Palm Sunday, the end of Lent. I wonder how Lent has been for you – how God has been a part of all that has happened, all you have done and experienced these past 6 weeks.

As a church we set aside this time, these 6 weeks, to focus on God and make more space for Christ in our lives. My commitment to you was to write you some questions and suggestions for you to reflect on, and maybe write about in your quiet time. I wonder how that went for you. I'm going to ask you to tell the person next to you about that in a minute.

In our worship we have done a series on the gospel of John, around the topic of 'Who we are in Christ'. We got up close and personal with some of the amazing characters that we meet in John – Nicodemus, Lazarus, the crippled man sitting by the pool for 38 years, the man born blind. And as we got to know them better we perhaps got to know ourselves better.

I started us off 2 months ago by asking you 'who are you?' 'Who are we human beings? – are we wretched broken sinners or glorious children of the living God ... or maybe we are both at the same time.

I wonder how you have grappled with the twin sides to who you are this Lent ... sinner & saint, broken and whole, lost and redeemed, blind and yet seeing, born in sin and born again, alone and yet profoundly loved

Could I ask you to take a couple of minutes to tell the person sitting next to you how Lent has been for you. Have you done some of the journal exercises and if so what did you discover? Have you found some other ways to make space for God, or maybe God has found some other ways to make space in you.

43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Jesus entered Jerusalem that day, for Passover, with a double vision. He knew the road so well, he knew the bumps in the path, the best spots to sit in the shade. All his life he had been walking that path, he knew it like the back of his hand. But this time was different. This time the crowd was shouting for him, waving branches and singing for him. They were waiting for Jesus. He was the buzz, the gossip, - there was no other news that day in Jerusalem except Jesus!

Here he comes, join your voice to the shout of praise
lay your cloak in the dust for him to ride over, let's imagine he is a mighty
conquering general, arriving home in victory! Hosanna, the Lord Saves! Hosanna!

Jesus accepts their praise. It was a moment of joy and worship. Halleluia! Let it rip!
it was fun, it was celebration. It gave glory to God

So when the Pharisees rush out with their hands over their ears complaining about
the noise levels, Jesus says "Let them shout – if they don't the very stones will!"

Let praise and worship and thanks burst out of us sometimes
because we worship a great and mighty God

If we let the shusher-up-ers squash our voice, then the stones themselves will have
to sing out on our behalf.

I started by saying that Jesus had double vision that day

As he looked up at the walls of Jerusalem suddenly he could see them in ruins
He could hear both the shouts of praise around him but he could also hear wails of
grief. And so he enters Jerusalem not puffed up with glory and praise but in sharp
sorrow. He weeps. and all through that Passover week he keeps seeing the Temple
in ruins, broken stones lying everywhere

Luke 21:5-6 ... 20-24

And he lives into this vision of his, until his own sense of himself becomes blurred
with the coming destruction of the Temple ... and he prophesies over Jerusalem, he
weeps over it, he says "I will tear it down and in 3 days rebuild it"

He feels his own imminent death in the very stones he walks on
that week of Passover.

7 days

just like the 7 days that Joshua and his people walked around and around the city
of Jericho

I wonder if Jesus remembered Joshua. As he stumbled in his vivid vision of
destruction, as the walls tumbled around him, did he feel like Joshua shouting in
victory?

I don't know, it is just ironic, though, don't you think ... this goes deep into the
tension that the Bible holds within itself. Don't jump too quickly to resolve the

conflicts within scripture too superficially. This is huge, this tension between Joshua and Jesus. It takes us deep into our own hearts and souls, into the tensions we live with every day ...

there is Joshua with his trumpet shouting out the victory of God as the walls crumble and the enemy is defeated, killed, women and children and all, the ultimate victory!

and there is Jesus, weeping, knowing that within the lifetime of these children running beside him on the Jerusalem road, that the enemy would defeat them and these great grand walls in front of him would come tumbling down and many would be killed, women and children and all

and Jesus keeps on riding that donkey, he walks into the heart of the city, and weeps, and walks through the week ahead to the cross allowing his body to be broken, his breath to be squeezed out, the ultimate surrender.

Who are we in Christ?

How do we carry in our hearts and minds and diaries both the victory and the surrender?

How can our own failures and weeping carry us deeper into Christ?

I don't have an answer for you

All I can do is invite you into this circle
around this table

which is the body and blood of Christ
broken for you, poured out for you

This is the space in which Jesus is the centre

Please sit as we sing

and prepare ourselves to receive him, Christ, the cornerstone,
crucified and living Lord

Communion for Palm Sunday: May the rocks cry out

(no responses)

Lift your hearts to the living God!
Lift your praises to the Lord Jesus
Hosanna! Hosanna!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest!
If our praises fail and our thanks dry up
may the rocks cry out
may the depths of the earth shout your praise.

All glory is yours, all life, all hope, all beauty
all creation sings of you
all history tells your story
All honour is yours
for you came to us
born as one of us
poured out in love,
present in power
Jesus, Lord Jesus, you rejected the way of control
you chose the way of service
you rejected the sword and the horn of victory
you chose the cross and crown of thorns
You who danced with angels and commanded the stars
you walked step by step into our darkness and shame

Lamb of God you take away the sin of the world
have mercy on us (x2)
Lamb of God you take away the sin of the world
grant us your peace

Jesus, Lord Jesus, we remember you
met with your friends on that darkest night
even in your fear and grief
you gave thanks to God
you took bread, broke it, gave it to your disciples
and said "This is my body, which is broken for you. Take this, eat it, and remember me."
Then you lifted up the cup of the covenant
spoke aloud your gratitude to the Father
and said "This is my blood, which is poured out for you. Take this, drink this, and receive forgiveness."

Jesus, Lord Jesus, we glorify you

for your immense generosity
for your death on the cross
for waiting in the tomb, descending into hell
Father, Lord God, we glorify you
for raising Jesus from the death
for sending your Spirit in power
to break open all other powers
to overcome death and hell and sin
and open to us the way of life everlasting

Spirit, gracious Spirit, we glorify you
for you are here, with us now
here in this circle of friends
here in these gifts of bread, wine and grape juice
Feed us, fill us, break us, heal us
over and over again
until we grow more and more to be the people of Christ

Thank you, Lord of all, Thank you.