



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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June 2, 2013

Pentecost 2

Sermon Text: [Joshua 5:13-6:5, 6:20](#)

Mr. Timothy Pingel

First Lesson: [Joshua 5:13-6:5, 6:20](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 142](#)

Second Lesson: [James 1:2-12](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 7:1-10](#)

Faith Trusts in God's Message

To do what seems ridiculous

To give us victory

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I think the "Hokey Pokey" is an interesting dance. If you've ever been to a wedding before, no doubt at some point in the evening you found yourself doing the "Chicken Dance" or the "Hokey Pokey". Why we spend so much time in life doing these silly dances is still a mystery. Life is certainly more than just turning yourself all about. But if all that you know about life was learned at a wedding reception, maybe that's what you would believe.

I have to believe that the "Hokey Pokey" originated long after Joshua walked on the shore of the Jordan River about 1,400 years before Christ. But the instructions that Joshua received from the Lord about how they were going to conquer the great walled city of Jericho had to make about as much sense to Joshua as the "Hokey Pokey" does for us today.

Okay, Jericho, the city is walled. It was defended by an army. It looked like no one could defeat it. So, "Here is what I want you to do Joshua. Walk around it once a day for six days. On the seventh day, walk around it seven times. On the seventh time around the city, everyone shout and I will make the walls of the city fall down, and you can go in and conquer the city." After hearing that, I think the "Hokey Pokey" is a little bit more reasonable.

How in the world would Joshua tell the fighting men of Israel his plan with a straight face? There is only one answer...it's by faith. [Hebrews 11:30](#) says "*By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.*" Faith believes the outrageous, ridiculous promises of God. Today we see that faith trusts in God's message. Even when he promises to do what seems ridiculous, we trust that he will give us the victory.

Joshua had a tough act to follow, didn't he? Moses had led the people out of Egypt. Moses had led them for 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Moses had pleaded for the lives of the Israelites when God wanted to destroy them. But now Moses was gone. He was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. He had disobeyed God, so he

did not get to go into the Promised Land. Moses had seen God face to face. He had served faithfully. But now he was gone. Who was left? Joshua.

Joshua had trusted in God as one of the 12 spies that had been sent into Canaan 40 years earlier. God had told him to be strong and courageous and that he would help Joshua. But still, Joshua hadn't been the one to stand up to Pharaoh. He hadn't seen God face to face the same way that Moses did. And now he was left to lead a rebellious stiff-necked people. I sure can think of other jobs that I would have applied for.

But Joshua sought to be faithful. He led the people across the Jordan on dry ground. He was the leader of the people on the last day that the Manna came down from heaven. Now Joshua was looking at Jericho. No doubt he was scratching his chin and thinking "How in the world would they defeat this walled fortress?" As he considered this problem, he met a man who had his sword drawn. Evidently Joshua was away from the camp at Gilgal and he was worried. "Are you for us or our enemies?" was the natural question. How shocking must the answer have been. "Neither. I'm not on your side or Jericho's side. I am on the Lord's side." That certainly would freeze my blood.

And then to hear the same words that Moses heard at the burning bush. "Take off your sandals. You are on holy ground." God had come to him. He had a message that Joshua had to hear. God was there. He would not leave his people on their own but he was on his own side. He was doing what needed to be done for the salvation of the world, not just for Joshua.

So there is Joshua, face down in the dirt. Bare feet. His heart beating in his chest. And God was telling him that the fortress of Jericho was already delivered into his hands. That was great news!

But then things got a little strange. The victory was his, but first they would have to walk around Jericho with the Ark of the Covenant, once a day, for six days. Then they would walk around the city seven times on the seventh day and then shout, and the walled fortress would no longer have walls. It kind of sounds a bit like "You put your right hand in and you shake it all about."

There was no earthly logical reason to believe this message that the Lord had sent to him. You don't defeat an enemy by repeated hype and then a loud shout. It had to seem ridiculous, don't you think? But the nature of faith is to believe in the face of reason that screams, "It doesn't make sense!" Your faith and my faith is that we are forgiven through Jesus' perfect life in our place. We are forgiven because he was punished in our place. We know this. We believe this. We rejoice in it. But still, it's unreasonable.

The next time that you get pulled over for speeding, try to explain to the officer that you should not get a ticket because someone else drove according to the law in your place. I doubt that will get you very far. But that is exactly what we believe will get us into

heaven. Jesus obeyed the Law perfectly in our place. He was punished in our place. Now we stand holy in God's eyes through faith in Jesus. It sounds ridiculous, but we know it to be true because that is what God has told us.

Faith is not trusting in the obvious. It's not trusting in what we can understand. It's trusting in what God promises. It's trusting in his promise even when reason screams that God's promises are ridiculous.

How would you have liked to have been Joshua and have to give your generals that briefing that outlined the plan of attack for Jericho? Reason screamed it was silly, but faith said that if God says it, it's as good as done. You and I know this to be true. But man, is it hard to live it. We see the logical holes in God's promises. He tells us that all things will work for our good, but it's hard to believe that when we are in the middle of heartache and loss. God tells us that he is in control of all things and will see to it that everything works out for our eternal good. But when you are sitting in the chair with tear-stained hands and we face the pains of life, it's hard to see exactly where that eternal good is.

But that is the nature of faith. It believes what it can't see. It trusts in the power of God even when it does not make sense. Joshua believed. You and I believe that Jesus has done it all even when logic tells us that we must have something to do. No. We don't. Jesus did it all. We are forgiven. Heaven is ours through faith in Jesus' life and death alone.

We trust that victory is ours through God alone. It does not come through our power. It does not come through our wisdom. Would human wisdom ever have devised a plan of attack on Jericho like the one that God gave to Joshua? Of course not, but Joshua had the strength of faith to believe that God would give him the victory. And that's exactly what God did. On the seventh day, when they did what God commanded, the walls came tumbling down. It was not logical. It was not because of the power of the Israelite army. But it was a decisive victory. The walls fell. The Israelites prevailed. God gave an amazing victory.

God has done the same for you and for me. He defeated the power of sin, death and the devil. He didn't do it by our goodness or our efforts. He did it by the life and death of Jesus. We live in the blessing that his victory is secured for us. We are forgiven. Heaven is ours through faith in Jesus. Don't tell me that it does not make sense. Don't tell me that I have to do something. Just tell me that God has done it all. Then, I will gladly dance in joy and turn myself about because heaven is what it's all about. Amen.