

Joshua 5:13-6:20

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 May 2026

Preacher: Tim Suffield

[0 : 00] My name's Tim. I'm part of the team here at Harvest Church. We are continuing this morning our series preaching through the book of Joshua in the Old Testament.

! If you've got a Bible with you and you want to turn that, we'll be reading from the end of Joshua 5 in a moment. But just before we get into it, do you ever feel like you can't progress? Do you ever feel like you're stuck in a rut? Do you ever feel like maybe you're weighed down by the weakness or the sickness of your body, that you're weighed down by your own sin? That wounds that others have done to you, they just live on and on and you cannot get free of them. That somehow you would say, it's like I'm bound up in chains, it's just something I can't get beyond. But how can that which has power over us be broken? That's the question. How can the walls come down?

[1 : 08] It's Joshua chapter 5. I'm going to start reading at verse 13. When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked. And behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand.

Oh no. And Joshua went to him and he said, are you for us or for our adversaries? And he said, no. Are you for us or them? No.

But I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped him and said to him, what does my Lord say to his servants?

And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so.

Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua, see, I have given Jericho into your hands with its king and mighty men of valor.

[2 : 27] You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus you shall do for six days. On the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times.

And the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a loud blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout.

And the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.

So Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests and said to them, take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark of the Lord.

And he said to the people, go forward, march around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord. I'm going to pause there. I just want to reflect on this figure that Joshua meets before we go on and read what happened to that city.

He meets this man, he finds a man with a drawn sword, who describes himself as the commander of angelic armies. The commander of the armies of the Lord.

[3 : 44] Which should, on its own, be a terrifying statement. Every time anyone meets an angel in the Bible, the first thing the angel says is, don't be afraid because they're scary looking. I don't know if you've read the descriptions of the Old Testament of what these things look like, but it's freaky.

And the right response to an angel appearing in front of you is fear. And so they say, don't be afraid because they're not there to do your harm. And this commander, whoever he was, the first thing that Joshua does in response, once he hears who he is, as he falls down this face, he worships him.

He's told that it is holy ground, so he must take off his sandals. He'll be thinking, oh gosh, it's just like when Moses, who taught me everything I know, when he met God at that burning bush, somehow it's the same. And then, when this commander speaks in Joshua 6 verse 2, the text just says, the Lord spoke to Joshua with the divine name.

If you ever see Lord in capital letters in your Bible, that's to stand in the place of the name Yahweh, which is God's personal name. Who is this? If we were at all unsure about the identity of this figure, in Revelation 19 we meet the commander of the armies of the Lord on a white horse, in a robe drenched in the blood of his enemies, leading an army dressed in linen.

This is Jesus. This is the pre-incarnate Jesus. Joshua comes face to face with Jesus and says, are you on our side or their side?

[5 : 22] And Jesus says, no. So that's the wrong question. You're on my side or their side, Jesus? No. The implication being, the right question is, are we on his side?

He doesn't get on our side. We are asked, do we align ourselves with Jesus? To be with Jesus redefines everything in your life.

Because Jesus plus anything equals nothing. But Jesus on his own is everything. You can't add him to your life. You have to realign everything, give up anything he tells you to, and follow him wholeheartedly.

And a question for us, not really my main point today, but a question for us is, whose side are you on? Are you on Jesus' side or anybody else's?

Don't be the kind of person who says to him like Joshua did, you're on my side or not? Because he'll just say no. But you can be on his. Let me keep reading.

[6 : 30] Picking back up at verse 8. And just as Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of ram's horns before the Lord went forwards, blowing the trumpets with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them.

The armed men were walking before the priests who were blowing the trumpets, and the rear guard was walking after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. But Joshua commanded the people, you shall not shout or make your voice heard.

Neither shall any word go out of your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then shall you shout. So don't get carried away. He's like, you might get excited by this, guys.

Got to shout at the right moment. Don't get carried away. We're just going to walk. So he caused, it's verse 11, so he caused the ark of the Lord to circle the city going about it once. And they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priest took up the ark of the Lord. And the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of Ramthorns before the ark of the Lord walked on.

[7 : 32] And they blew the trumpets continually. And the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard was walking after the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets blew continually. And the second day they marched around the city once and returned into the camp.

So they did for six days. On the seventh day, they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times.

It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, Shout, for the Lord has given you the city, and the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.

Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when they are devoted, excuse me, lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it.

But all the silver and gold and every vessel of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord. I'll pause there one moment. It sounds like a very long instruction. It's important because they do not do that.

[8 : 46] And that is kind of the drama of the next couple of chapters, that they do not do what Joshua has just told them to. But, so, the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown, and as soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.

This is the word of the Lord. Now, before I get into it, if you've got your Bible open in front of you, you might notice, you're like, oh, Tim, you stopped one verse short at the end of that paragraph. You stopped short of reading that very difficult, quite violent sentence that comes next.

Yeah, I did, deliberately, because next week I'm going to preach on, what do we do, a message called violence in the gospel, essentially what do we do about all of the violence that we find in the

book of Joshua, where the people of God are told, go and take this place, and then it seems like they kill everyone there.

What do we do with that? So I deliberately stop there, because we're going to talk about it next week. What do we notice?

So again, before we get into the heart of the walking, and the walls, and all the rest of it, just another thing just to notice as we're going along. Did you see how in verse 12, on day two, Joshua rises early in obedience?

[10:03] And then by the day seven, in verse 15, everybody is rising early in obedience. So they start to follow him and copy him. There's something there about leadership, but there's also something about, it is actually wise to rise early to obey the Lord.

We're told here in verse 15 that the men got up early to obey. There is something of wisdom there for us. It is a good idea to structure your day, starting with time, praying, and reading the word. Now that doesn't always work for everyone. If you find a different time, that can be okay. But I particularly encourage us, as this passage does, that men get up early to obey. I was encouraged in my early 20s to learn, I'm not an early writer, to learn the habit of getting up early so that I could pray and read the words.

And that is how men often lead their households. You can train your body to get up. It's never too late to do that. Consider it. Again, it's not really the point of my message today, but consider it. Get up early to obey. Okay. What do we find? We find these people of Israel. They've crossed the ford of the Jordan. Excuse me. They didn't cross the fords. They crossed downstream the fords of the Jordan, as Graham took us through last week.

[11:23] And then we've skipped a couple of passages where they make sure they're all circumcised. They keep a Passover where they make this pile of memorial stones for God. They're kind of ensuring that they are obedient before him.

And now they find themselves camped at a place called Gilgal, near this place, Jericho. There's a lot of them, but they were weak people.

Come into a land where people have good military technology, lots of chariots and that kind of thing, they've got sticks and stones. Barely a sword amongst them. They are outmanned.

They are outgunned. They are outplanned. Be careful or I'll start singing Hamilton. But they're not people who know siege warfare. Jericho is not...

We probably picture some great popular city. There aren't many of them around in the late Bronze Age in this part of the world. But this is an important fort. And it's a fort at the fords of the Jordan.

[12:22] So they cross somewhere else, but it's the place that you would normally cross the Jordan. It's there for that military reason. The archaeology of it, because people have found the site of Jericho and you can investigate it.

There was once a really big city there in the early Bronze Age. Someone destroyed. Probably these guys when they came in, the Canaanites. And then the late Bronze Age, when Joshua was going in, there's evidence of a much smaller fort built on the same site that was burned to the ground.

Well, pretty much about two sentences after I stopped reading. You can go and visit the site if you want to. You can see where this place once was. And they're given...

So it's a significant fort, largely full of fighting men. And they're given a plan that is wild. Like I said, not people who know siege warfare, but the normal thing to do would be you camp around it so no one can get in and you kind of wait until they run out of food and then one way or another you'll take the place.

That's kind of how sieges go and then later in history you might have equipment to take down walls and that kind of thing. It's a little early for much of that. So a siege would mostly involve waiting and cutting off their supplies.

[13:35] Take a long time. Instead, they're told, just march around it once a day in silence with the exception of these ram swords.

They're told, don't make the shout. Like, don't get too excited until day seven. But just march around it with the ark of God, his very presence. Some of you before it, some of you behind it.

And have these seven priests with their ram's horns, which is when it says trumpets, that's what it means. It's like a horn of a ram that you can blow through. They're not melodic. It's a sort of...

I was talking to someone earlier and they said, oh, is it like those things my kids have that just seem to make noise? Yes. That's essentially what they are. I think you can, if you're very skilled, make

something vaguely tuneful on a ram's horn, but it depends on the shape of the thing. It's just a natural thing that's been on an animal and it kind of makes a... sort of sound. It's not nice, but it's loud. So they're just making this cacophony.

[14 : 39] They're in silence, but the ram's horn's making a... It's not like two ones. It's a cacophony of noise as they walk around. And then they're told, okay, that's it for the day.

You've been around once. It's not huge. It's taken a little bit of time, but, you know, not all day. After all, they can walk around it seven times in a day. It's quite a lot of the day left. Just wait for tomorrow now and they go back to camp.

And it probably felt very exciting to start with. I wonder if by day four people are starting to be quite confused. This is not some sort of, oh, this is like an ancient Near East thing where they marched around with, you know, with their gods, with them, and then that's how people knew they were going to fight.

It's not a thing. It would have made absolutely no sense to the people then. This is not one of those things where we're like, we just don't understand it because we don't have the context. It would make no sense to them either. They're like, this is bizarre. It is not good military sense.

Nor is it particularly anything other than confusing to the guys in the fort. They're like, what are you doing? You camped all the way over there and you just keep marching around and blowing those ramps on.

[15 : 51] It's annoying. But we could take you in a fight. And I do wonder if Joshua starts to have something like a mutiny on his hands by day four or five.

Or at least you'd expect it. That the people would start to think, it's not working. I know you said it was a seven-day plan, but we're starting to feel quite foolish.

It must have been embarrassing. Just to walk around the place while probably, the first day, the soldiers would be a bit like, what is this? There's quite a few of them. And then after that, they'd start to think, is this what they've got?

You imagine the jeers from the walls started as the days went on. And maybe they're even just laughing at them. By day six. We don't know that, but I wonder. It must be embarrassing.

I suspect there was quite a lot of chat in the camp about, we're really going to do it again tomorrow. Like, tomorrow is the Sabbath. Are we really going to do this?

[16 : 55] Joshua was like, yeah, we're going to do it again. Yeah. And so they kept going, despite the embarrassment. I do wonder if sometimes we might get embarrassed and give up too soon on things that the Lord might call us to.

One writer I was reading this week said, he wonders if that's why we see less miracles than some of our forebears in the faith. Do we just get embarrassed and give up too soon?

Perhaps. But they keep going, despite the derision, despite the embarrassment. They march each day, day one, day two, day three, day four, day five, day six.

They toot their horns. Day one, day two, it's more melodic than a sheffar, but anyway. Day one, day two, day three, day four, day five, day six. And then day seven comes.

And Joshua says, today we're going to go around it seven times. And they're thinking, is this just embarrassment, piled on embarrassment, but the Lord, he led us across the Jordan.

[18 : 07] We saw that. And the Lord, we know the stories, literally from our fathers and mothers. He led them across the Red Sea. We've seen, we heard of the plagues of Egypt. Maybe some of them even would have been children then.

They're like, maybe he'll do a great thing. And so they do it. They march around seven times, marching and marching again, in kind of silence, feeling a bit silly about the whole thing, with the Ramsons making their blaring noise over and over again.

And then Joshua comes and he says, right, you know the command, now is the time, shout. shout. And they raise this great shout of noise, all of them, all at once.

And then the walls come tumbling down. And once they don't do anything, it's not, it's not a great military plan, because it's not a military operation. They shout, and then the walls come tumbling down.

And Joshua was at pains to say that Rahab, who we met a couple of weeks ago, and her family are saved, like they promised that they would be, despite Rahab's intervention, saving those spies, making no difference at all in them taking the city.

[19 : 24] Do you notice that? Like, if the spies had come back with good military information, and you'd like, oh yeah, that let us take it, it would be, you know, it's kind then, isn't it, to save the person who helped them. Made no odds. Nothing, those spies found out, made any difference to the taking of Jericho, because they took Jericho, because they walked around it, and shouted, and then God went, and the walls fell flat.

But because she had allegiance, to the God of Israel, they saved her, and her family. Is it not the same for us, that we play no part in delivering ourselves, from sin, from death, from the things that bind us, but it's by our allegiance to Jesus, that we find ourselves rescued.

He's the one who's won. It would be much like it at Jericho, they might have felt like, yeah, we participated, kind of, but it's not like, the noise of their shout, produced some, clever resonance, that made all the stones shake, and fall over.

No. But they shout in worship to God, and then God knocks it over. It is like that for us. We don't actually do the things. We worship the Lord, and then he acts.

Do you want to see God, move and act, in your life, or in our community? Do you want to see people, rescued, from the things that bind them?

[20 : 51] Do you want to see people healed, and delivered, from demonic power? Do you want to see communities, businesses, and households, become kingdom outposts, that live in a different way, and operate, in a different way?

Do you want to go, to the ends of the earth, to take the gospel, to all the nations, or maybe to the end of your streets, to take the gospel, to your neighbor? On the face of it, these are very hard things.

The devil laughs, from the walls of hell, at our desires, to do great things for God. What are we? Weak. Not skilled.

No particular power, to change anything. And the gates of hell, are strong, and they are shut up, inside and out. Demons, lie in the battlements, as it were.

And yet, what does Jesus say? The gates of hell, shall not prevail, against his church. Gates don't do a lot of attacking, do they? But when the church, marches, against the enemy, which doesn't look, like military warfare, it looks like prayer, it looks like, showing the gospel, it looks like living, for the kingdom, it looks like worship.

[22 : 15] Gates fall, walls tumble, everything falls flat. So how can we, see the kind of victory, that Israel, that Hebrew people, excuse me, see, at Jericho?

Well, at Jericho, they have three weapons. They have, the ark, they have, trumpets, made of ram's horns, and they have their voices.

We essentially, have those same three weapons. The ark, is the presence of God, located in this one place, at this point of history, and yet now, in the day of the church, the spirit has been poured out, on all flesh, who turn to Jesus, and so we find, the presence of God, is where his people gather, to hear.

We feel this, if you like, is in that sense, the ark. The presence of God, is here with us, we've got that one. And they have, ram's horn trumpets, and this is not a call, that suddenly we add, to the band, some very squeaky, kind of horn-like things, that wouldn't be, particularly delightful, but, why have they gone, for ram's horn trumpets, other than the fact, they make a lot of noise, and they've got some.

Those are both true, but why? Well, where did they come from? Where did they get, ram's horns from? They got them, from rams, that they sacrificed, to the worship of God.

[23 : 44] Which means, that these horns, are evidence, of the blood, of the sacrifices, that would cleanse them, from their sin. In other words, what they're doing, when they make, this blaring sound, what they're doing, is they are proclaiming, the blood, that covers their sin, and saying nothing else.

That's what they're doing, as they walk around Jericho, again, and again, and again, and again, and saying nothing. They're proclaiming, the blood, that covers their sin, again, and again, and again. It's not melodic, but it is loud. Which means that, of course, for us, we know, that those ram sacrifices, were a shadow, we're told in the book of Hebrews, of the once for all sacrifice, that Jesus has on the cross.

Such that he died once, with blood to cover the sin, of any who turn to him. So not only do we have, the presence of God with us, but, we are also able, to proclaim the blood, that covers our sin.

Because, Jesus has done so. That's the gospel. That's what we sing about. And then the third thing, they had was their voices. They had a shout.

[24 : 59] They had, in essence, faith expressed, in confidence. They had noise. We can have that too. Expressing our faith, in confidence, ideally, with noise.

The presence of God, Jesus' blood that covers our sins, and our desire to proclaim it, and noise, telling, saying that thing.

Worship is warfare. That's what they're doing, is they march around, and to, and eventually shout. They're worshipping God, and saying that he is the one, who's covered their sin, and he is the king of the world, and this little thought, belongs to him.

Which is why eventually, he goes, yes it does, and the walls fall flat. Worship is warfare.

It might have felt embarrassing, on day four, or five. I wonder if you ever feel embarrassed, when we sing together. I know some of you do, because you tell me you do, but, there's a, like, you know, I'm not really a singing person, maybe you think, or it's just like, these songs aren't, they're all white.

[26 : 13] But, I'll just, I'll sing, to be honest, I just, I can't sing, maybe you're thinking. No, me neither. And you're, so you just sing, quite quietly. Stop it.

Like, that temptation, to just be like, I'll sing quietly enough, the person next to me, cannot hear me, because to be honest, I'm not very good at this, and I don't, and maybe I'm not even feeling it, particularly. I would like to encourage you, to sing, absolutely, at the top of your voice.

Even if, like me, you can't sing. It's like, some of you, or if you sit near me, you might hear it, but some of you, if you ever end up in front of me, you definitely hear it. The, like, I can't sing at all.

I bet, and I used to be, because the louder you sing, the more you're vaguely able to hear the tune, but, the, but I learned, again, as a young man, it's like, you know what, I just love Jesus.

That's going to make a lot of noise. It's good for my soul. It's probably vaguely good for the souls of the people around me. It is, actually. We're told, repeatedly in the New Testament, yeah, we sing worship to God, but also to each other.

[27 : 20] You're addressing God, and the people around you, and you're thinking, oh, no, poor them. Sure, but what they do is, when you hear someone sing words of, of songs, that are full of truth, like, somehow it helps you believe it more than just you sing it yourself.

Like, you encourage them. You literally put courage into them. By them, oh, he's singing loud, she's singing loud, yeah, okay, I'll get in there too. let's make some noise.

Well, we worship, sing with voice. Don't be embarrassed. Bring your contribution. Come bring that prayer of praise. When you're like, you know what, all I've really got is, thank you, Jesus, because you love me?

Great. Don't be embarrassed to come and bring that. We would really love to hear it. It would do all of us good. And you'll find that if you did that, there will be a rise in the room of people going, yes. In fact, make sure you do that, by the way, when someone brings a contribution. Make sure they hear you, amending them, and saying yes, because it encourages them, that they're like, oh, yeah, the church is with me, and also I could do that again.

[28 : 26] Make some noise when we worship. We might have a little go at that in a second. We'll see how it goes.

One last thing. When we declare the victory of Jesus, demons flee. And that's not usually a big, loud thing. You might be like, oh, does that happen here? Yeah, plenty. But that's not a thing where we would, you know, make a big scene of someone and sort of start shouting and then start manifesting.

We don't particularly like that because the demon does like that. The demon loves attention. We want our attention on Jesus. But it happens. People are afflicted by demons. I'm not going to lay out a whole theology of that to them where that might raise questions for some people.

Do please come and ask them. But we believe in delivering people from demonic power. It's not a big show. Usually what happens over a couple, you know, over a little bit of time is we carefully root out, how has this thing got its hook into you?

And the tools usually are repentance and forgiveness. They tend to be the tools that Jesus gives us for everything. Like what might we need to repent of? Who might we need to forgive? Where has this got its hook? And then we remove where it's got its hook with repentance and forgiveness.

[29 : 39] And then we say, in the name of Jesus, spirit of whatever it is, go away. And they do exactly what they're told because Jesus is their master. We have that power.

So we don't have that power. He gifts us that authority, but it's his. We can in confidence cast out demons. We can in confidence pray for healing. Again, it's complicated because sometimes people don't get healed and that is challenging emotionally.

It's quite challenging theologically, to be honest, and I'm not going to open all that up today, but those questions are important. But we should have confidence to pray for healing, knowing that God does heal, that he loves to heal, even if we're not always sure quite why he does or doesn't on particular occasions.

Which means that when we, well, we should have confidence that as we worship, that as we pray, chains break, walls fall, demons flee, sickness is healed.

So we're going to have a go at some of that. How's that sound? Could the band come? In a minute, I have to open it first, I'm going to pray for healing. I'm going to kind of walk us through that and we will see what happens.

[30 : 55] I suspect the Lord will heal at least someone. I'm pretty sure he will. And then, we are going to have a go at making some noise, a little bit like that shout that made the walls of Jericho fall.

And when we get there, I'm going to ask us to, think in our hearts of what are the chains or wounds or walls that we want to see fall in our lives, in our community, in our church.

And while we hold those in our hearts, we're going to make some noise before the Lord. I'll talk us through that in a minute. We might find that a little bit difficult. Quite a lot of people know English and that can be quite a challenge kind of culturally to be asked to make a bit of noise that other people might be able to hear.

Some of you from other cultures might have to help us. Because you're... Yes! There we go. A bit of Zimbabwean culture on display by which I mean just not embarrassed by worshipping the Lord.

So, Blaiseby and many others will lead the way for us in a moment. But, we're going to make some noise before God. So, firstly, I'd like to pray for healing. Would you be willing to stand with me if you're able? And what I'd ask you to do, I'd ask everyone to shut their eyes.

[32 : 07] If you have something in your body that you would like the Lord to heal, could you put your hand where it is? Or if that doesn't feel appropriate publicly, maybe put your hand on your heart.

I'm just going to pray a very simple prayer. Lord Jesus, we believe that you are the healer and that you desire and love to heal. In the name of Jesus, sickness, go right now.

In the name of Jesus, pain, go right now. In the name of Jesus, old wounds heal right now. Muscles loosen, bones strengthen, spines untwist, anxiety calm, depression lift. Stomach's quiet. Amen. Stomach's quiet. Amen.