

“History Making”

Text: Joshua 6

**Central Baptist Church ~ Sunday, April 17, 2016
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Introduction

- A. Three sons – two are no longer at home – but they like to watch the history channel**
- B. I tell him that there are people in life who WATCH history, and there are people who MAKE history**
- C. Those who make history are often defined by their first step**
 - 1. First step can start us on a road of no return
 - 2. True in both positive and negative ways
 - 3. EVER HAD INTERNAL CONVERSATIONS
 - a. The “if I do this / if I say this” there is no turning back
 - b. It is the line that once crossed – it is hard to return
 - c. It is starting on a highway – realizing we are on a road with no exit for quite a while
 - 4. It is deciding to tell the truth, or not tell the truth/ It is saying “I do” / “I forgive” / or “I will never forgive”
 - a. It is committing resources to an investment –win or lose
 - b. It is making a choice on medical treatment – knowing you can only choose one
 - 5. Kind of decisions that we look back on later in life – and realize they set a direction for our lives for years
 - a. Decision to become a pastor rather than a professor in 1987 / Decision to plant a church in 1990 / Decision to work for Fellowship in 2007
 - 6. Those first steps define the kind of history that we will create

B. I realize some people have no ambitions to be history makers

- 1. I would argue we don’t have a choice – we create history every day – the only thing that changes is the scope, the size, and the direction of our influence
 - a. Every day we create history with our family / co-workers / friends / church
 - b. 2nd CONSULTATION: help you create a kind of new history that honors God
 - c. Central – fascinating to look into your past – church started with 8 people in 1927, beginning the first year that Fellowship Pacific existed
 - d. **BUT WE ARE NOT HERE SOLELY TO HONOR THE PAST – but to help you also define the future**
- 2. TO TAKE THE **NEXT FIRST STEP** OF YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD
- 3. **REALIZE THAT THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN HARD FOR ANY OF US TO DO – to take big risks for God – not a new problem**
 - a. God says – take first step out of Egypt & I will protect you // we prefer – defeat the Egyptians & *then* I will be glad to risk leaving for the promised land
 - b. God says – get in the waters of the Jordan & I will turn it back so you can cross // we say “turn it back & I’ll be there – probably second to cross; chanting ‘we’re number two’”

- c. Before you think this is somewhat distant from our lives – principle we all deal with all the time:
 - (1) “God, give me money & then I will be generous”
 - (2) “God, give me confidence & then I will talk to someone about Jesus
 - (3) “God, give me more time then I will be able to really serve”
 - (4) “God, give me courage & then I will be obedient”
4. Not trying to minimize the reality here – it is scary / nerve-racking to be **first step** people
 - a. Never-the-less -- we are asking you to consider risking – for the cause of Jesus / for the glory of God / for the eternal well being of people around you
5. WHAT IS TRUE -- People who use their lives to make a difference for others and for God – People who are history makers in the Kingdom of God – are people who risk to take the first step

I. The First Step to High Ground

A. Jericho was a Strategically Important First Step

1. Situated in the Jordan Valley, at the base of ravines and roads that led to the top of the mountains of Canaan
 - a. Israel needed to gain that high ground if they were to spread out and take the land
 - (1) Joshua: three campaigns in the war --The drive to high ground in the middle of the country, dividing the opposition – then campaign in the south; then the north
2. **To get to the high ground meant beginning with the ancient fortified city of Jericho**
 - a. The walled city was not huge – a 6 acre footprint
 - b. But it was a tough place to begin the war
 - (1) Israel had never faced a battle of this sort – against an entrenched enemy
 - (2) Probably the oldest fortified city of the region
 - (3) Double walled fortress – walls over 20 feet high & 25 feet wide
3. But if they were to succeed in taking the land – this was the first step
4. Had a rather strange approach to the job
 - a. Sun Tsu – Art of War – would say that a siege of a fortified city is to avoided...
 - b. But if you had to -- Normal 5 ways of attacking a fortified city – ladders / break through / tunnel under / starve them / trick them
 - c. This was not one of the ways!

5. READ JOSHUA 6:1-16

II. **TWO First Step Characteristics**

A. Every Spiritual First Step Is Characterized by FAITH

1. This was NOT an exercise in WAR, but rather a faith building enterprise
2. HOW DO WE KNOW?
 - a. **Verse 2 – “I have delivered” – Past Perfect**
 - (1) Means the battle has already been won
 - (2) Direct continuation of God’s promise in chapter 1 – *“Be strong and courageous – for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”*

- (3) No matter what this battle may look like – it was about faith in God, not confidence in themselves

b. EXERCISE IN FAITH –because NOT a normal battle strategy: At least 4 indicators:

(1) Number 7 is important

- (a) Used 14 times in the chapter

- 7 priests / 7 trumpets / 7 days / 7 trips around Jericho on the seventh day
- “7” in OT to represent divine completeness
- Because this whole plan is about faith in God

(2) Ark in the middle of the pack

- (a) Just like it was front & centre when Israel crossed the Jordan river
(b) Because God is front and centre in the plan

(3) Jubilee trumpets used

- (a) Made from Rams horns – used in Israel’s feasts to proclaim the presence of God

c. EXERCISE IN FAITH - Josh didn’t tell them the plan ahead of time

- (1) People walked quietly around the city – probably made a complete circle – with some finishing their walk before others started

- (2) The ultimate experience of just going in circles

- (a) IF THIS WAS ME... (bit of skeptic)

- 1st day – checking out lay of land
- 2nd day – double checking – sound idea
- 3rd day – getting irritated – “*always was too much of a chart & planning person*”
- 4th day - muttering – “*must think we are stupid*” / some of you stayed home
- 5th day – “He is stalling for time – no idea what he is doing – or is just afraid – or maybe just seeing how many times we will do it / over ½ stayed home
- 6th day – Walking on his own
- 7th day – walk around 7 times – then we’ll shout a lot

3. NOTHING INDICATES THAT WAS THE CASE – their faith was expressed in obedience

a. KEY: FIRST STEPS OF FAITH ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT WE CAN OR CANNOT DO – THEY ARE ABOUT WHAT GOD CAN DO

- b. Faith, by its nature, is not centred in us – but in God – substance of things hoped for... without faith it is impossible to please God

- (1) Spiritual first steps are not determined by our feelings / our confidence / our abilities / or our resources / budget / building / personnel

- (2) **Spiritual first steps are determined by what we believe about God**

4. Kingdom impact / spiritual history making is an act of FAITH

5. Anything less than that is merely about self-confidence

B. 2nd Characteristic: Every Spiritual First Step Is Characterized by DEVOTION

1. In both attractive & ugly ways – there were no half way measures in this story

a. READ JOSHUA 6:20-21

2. Word “devoted” – again in vs 17

a. Everything in it was wholly consecrated to God – everything belonged to God

3. Wiped out everything & everybody

4. BEYOND THAT – DON'T MISS THIS – GOD DEMANDS A WHOLE-HEARTED DEVOTION

a. Sometimes – we take this demand far too lightly

b. There are no halfway measures with God

(1) He promised *all* of Canaan to Israel

(2) He punished *all* of Israel in the desert for their disobedience

(3) He destroyed *all* the Israelites who worshipped the Golden Calf as Sinai

(4) He demanded *all* the tribes help in the conquest

(5) *All* the law had to be kept

(6) *All* the heart was to be devoted to God

a. God demanded the same standard from every nation – including Israel

(1) God saved people who turned to him then – as he does now

(2) IN JERICHO – everything was devoted to God -- today still important – a first fruits mentality

C. The first steps to making spiritual history – in our lives / in our community / in our families / in our church / in our world – are always going to be about *faith and devotion*

1. Hope it is obvious that whole-hearted devotion and faith will always work hand in hand

2. Impossible to take first steps in faith if we are not entirely devoted to God

a. If we are wholly devoted, then we will inevitably take those steps of faith

3. **ASK YOU THIS – WHAT IS YOUR NEXT SPIRITUAL FIRST STEP?**

4. What walls need to come down this week by you acting in faith & devotion?

a. Commitment to Jesus / baptism / growth / service / giving / leadership

b. For some – it means to stop attacking life on your own terms – slow down – focus on God's presence – and let him lead

c. For others – it means a much more active obedience to what you already know

5. As people, most of the time – scary and counter-intuitive to do simply trust God to do what we should do

a. WE BELIEVE THAT GOD NOT ONLY HAD A GREAT PAST FOR THIS CHURCH -- HAS A GREAT FUTURE AS WELL

- Future is going to be about people coming to know Jesus / becoming like Jesus
- Going to be about faith and devotion – and ultimately about GOD
- Centred in the cross of Christ – his death and resurrection

b. But listen – for that to happen Central will need to destroy some of the fortresses in front of them in order to be increasingly & dynamically effective

c. AND THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ANOTHER FIRST STEP

- As a family of churches in Fellowship Pacific – there need to be risk – or our faith will not grow
- For your church and lives – there is risk

Conclusion

A. Old movie I saw on TV - Steel Magnolias

1. One of Julia Roberts earlier movies – “funniest movie to make you cry”
2. Story of a group of Southern Women – Roberts plays character of Shelby – newly wed who decides to get pregnant against the advice of virtually everybody
 - a. Doctor doesn’t want her to have a baby because she had Diabetes and would be placing her own life at risk
 - b. Powerful scene where Shelby discovers she is pregnant & goes to tell her mother (played by Sally Fields)
 - c. Mother shreds the joy of Shelby by her absolute fury that she would risk her life in that way
 - (1) Not willing to trade the life of her daughter for a grandchild she has never met
 - d. Shelby stops her dead – *“Mama – don’t you understand? I’d rather have 30 minutes of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special”*

B. Frequently get frustrated with myself because I am living too small – not enough faith and not enough devotion

1. Grant you - Something of an unfair burden to go through life wanting to be a maker of history
2. But – when we become a history maker in the scale and scope of our own life – God will use that in the scale and scope of eternity
3. I WANT TO BE A MAKER OF HISTORY - if only in the context of my own world / with my own family, friends, church
 - a. **It is worth the risk - because -- I would rather 30 minutes of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special!**

C. But that goal can seem too lofty to attain / in some senses – too lofty to even think about

1. But there is something I can do – I can take the first step from wherever my life is now
2. I can choose a life of faith & I can choose wholehearted devotion
3. I can choose it NOW & take my next first step
4. You can choose it NOW – YOU can take your first next step
 - a. Encourage you to take it
 - b. But understand – it will feel risky – because it will be about FAITH and DEVOTION
 - c. True in your own life / true in the life of this church
 - d. Choose to MAKE history! Don’t spend your life merely watching it