

God's Unconventional Ways

SCOTT HOEZEE

All through the Bible, God often has an interesting way of getting things done. He chose a childless pair of senior citizens to give birth to a new nation. He chose a man with a stutter to speak to God before Pharaoh of Egypt. He chose the youngest and least impressive child of a family to become the new king of Israel. He sent his only Son into this world by way of his getting born in a barn. Today on *Groundwork*, we will see another example of God's unlikely tactics as we continue in the stories told in the book of Joshua. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee. We want to welcome everyone to program four out of six in a series on the book of Joshua; and so far, Darrell, we have seen Joshua's call, we have looked at the story of the spies and Rahab, and then just in the last episode, we saw what happened when Israel finally officially crossed into the Promised Land of Canaan. They crossed the Jordan River; and now today, we are going to look at the first dramatic conquest in this book as the people of God take on the fortified and seemingly impregnable city of Jericho.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, this is it, Scott. I mean, we have been preparing for this whole moment for quite a long time, and this is the actual beginning of the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham way back: You are going to get a Promised Land; you are going to get descendants to inhabit that land; and this is the moment where they are going to go into the land and actually take it. So, we see that picking up there in Joshua Chapter 6.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are going to see before this program is out that there are a lot of lessons about trusting in God with all our hearts that are really applicable today too; but now let's go. Joshua 6:1: Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. ²Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³March around the city one with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

DARRELL DELANEY

So, needless to say, Scott, this is not a normal and regular military strategy. We have never seen anything like this before in scripture; we have never seen anything like this actually in the way people fight. You would expect there would be a siege of some sort; you would think there would be armies that are trying to break in in some way or blow things down, or whatever. Actually, this is a real different strategy to go around and not say a thing for six days straight.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I mean, how are they going to get in there? I mean, build some siegeworks; build some ladders. You are going to have to get in there. Build some foxholes; get weapons ready; form columns; get your men... No, this is about as unconventional a military strategy as you can get. Just march around the city, and do it for six days; that's it. Now, even in what we just read, Darrell, for the first verses of Joshua 6, it is really clear that on the seventh day God is going to do something miraculous. Okay, why not do on day one then, you know? I mean, if it is just going to be God taking care of things, why six whole days of marching around and kind of looking silly? We don't know, but that was what God said to do.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you have to be obedient in this situation whether you know what is going on or not, whether you understand what is going to happen or not. I mean, it is really powerful to see that they followed the instructions, even though they sounded kind of strange; and you see what God does on the seventh day. We pick up in Chapter 6:8. It says:

When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the Lord went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the Lord's covenant followed them. ⁹The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. ¹⁰But Joshua had commanded the army, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" ¹¹So he had the ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to the camp and spent the night there. ^{14b} They did this for six days.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now, the text doesn't tell us, but you have to wonder what was going on inside the city during these six days. What did the king of Jericho and his generals in the army make of all this weird marching around business? Six straight days and then they just go back to camp and have dinner. I mean, I wonder, was there some snickering laughter? Was the king saying; Good grief; we were afraid of these people? This Joshua has no more military sense than a donkey! This isn't going to work. So, we don't know, but it certainly had to look like Joshua didn't have any military sense whatsoever. So, you know, the people inside the city were probably confused; maybe there were some like Rahab, you know. She told the spies in Chapter 2: Everybody is trembling. We heard about your God. We heard what he did to the Egyptians; how you crossed the sea on dry land. So, maybe even though this looked like a nonstarter strategy, there may have been some people still trembling in their boots; but in general, it was an odd tactic.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what else is interesting that just came out when you were talking about this, Scott, was that sometimes God gives strange instructions, and then the people who follow them, they may or may not have a hard time. They may have been made fun of; they may have been disrespected; can you imagine what people were thinking when Noah was building an ark when they had never had any rain?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; in the middle of a meadow...

DARRELL DELANEY

In the middle of a place where there had never been any rain before; and I am pretty sure they were looking at him funny, and they were trying to figure out what he is up to, until the very rain drops; and then it was like: Oh, okay; this makes sense now. So, you know, when you bring up what could possibly be going on in the minds of the kind of Jericho and these soldiers, it could be...it makes a lot of sense to think they were probably like scratching their heads or laughing at these young people; but the fact that they obeyed in the midst of that, no matter what the people might think of it, I think those are the things that are commendable.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; we just wondered: Well, what were the people *inside* the city thinking. What of the people outside? What were the Israelites thinking? Maybe a few of them were rolling their eyes, too; like, what in the world, Joshua?

DARRELL DELANEY

We've got to do this again?

SCOTT HOEZEE

We've got to do this again? We did this yesterday; we did this three days ago...four days ago. But we have to trust God. I think you brought this image up in a previous episode in this series, Darrell: We are a microwave culture. You know, we want things done instantly. You know, even when we put a bag of popcorn into the microwave, it only takes a minute to pop, but we pace in front of the microwave: Come on; hurry up! I want my popcorn. But as you said, Darrell, God is more of a crockpot God, you know. It is low and slow; trust the process; let things go. So, six whole days of this seems backwards; and you know, I think, Darrell, we sometimes struggle with this today, too, you know. I mean, why do we today have to be lowly and gentle like Jesus? We hear a lot of people, even in the Church, talk about the culture war, especially in the United States here. We have a culture war and we want to fight that war the way everybody else does, through strong-arm politics and legislation and mixing it up with people; giving it to the powers that be; bullying people; but Jesus keeps saying: No, no; that is not the way...that is not the way; be gentle and lowly. So, like maybe Israel with this weird Jericho strategy, we sometimes think: How can Jesus' strategy work?

DARRELL DELANEY

And Jesus' strategy always works. He always goes counterintuitive to what the culture is doing and what people expect him to do. I mean, he beat death by dying on a cross...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; how is that?

DARRELL DELANEY

What is more counterintuitive than that? It is just a reminder that his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts; and we thank God because he is in control of that; but as we look into the next segment, we want to get into some more things that happen in this story, and what happens when Joshua and the Israelites obey him; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and today's program. We are in Joshua 6, and ultimately, we will get into Joshua 7, the great story of the battle of Jericho. We just saw, Darrell, the odd tactic that God told Joshua to follow: Just march around the city once a day for six days straight; but then comes the seventh day, and it goes like this.

DARRELL DELANEY

¹⁵One the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. ¹⁶The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city! ¹⁷The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. ¹⁹All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury." ²⁰When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged

straight in, and they took the city. ²¹They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, of course we know that it doesn't matter how loud you blast the trumpets or what the decibel level was of the shouts and so forth, you are not going to set up enough of a sympathetic vibration to bring down stone walls. Obviously, the Israelites never fired a shot. They didn't have battering rams to go at the gates. The walls fell because God knocked them down with a flick of his finger. So, this was clearly, clearly...we know who did this, and it wasn't the Israelites; but again, the lesson was: We have to trust God and do things the way God does them. We don't always have the best ideas. We don't always know the most expedient ways, but God gets things done in the end.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is beautiful to see that God asks us to do normal and ordinary things, and when we follow those strange instructions, he begins to do extraordinary and miraculous things; and he does that quite a bit through scripture. Even Jesus gives strange instructions to his disciples and people who he heals, and they follow those instructions and watch God do powerful things; and you know when you see that that God has to get the glory for it, because there is no way it could have been done by natural means.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right. Now, we talked about this in our first program, too, Darrell, but the elephant in the room that bears readdressing here in Joshua and in other parts of the Old Testament...it is hard for us to understand the total war concept that God demands: Kill even women and children—young and old. Now, we know, as we said before, we follow Jesus, the crucified one, and so none of this material is meant to say that the Church can be militant like that. That is what the Church...no, no. We follow the Prince of Peace. Even in the New Testament when military imagery is used, like Paul does when he talks about the armor of Christ, he says that our shields and weapons are not guns and stuff, they are faith, hope and love; and our best weapon—the sword—is the Word of the Lord. So, we know that we are not that kind of warrior, but whatever we make of what...it is sometimes called the *ban*, right? Nothing can live, and so forth. We said before, it is at least a part of God's terrible judgment on terrible sin and evil, but today we also know the ultimate punishment for that fell on Jesus, and so it is not our job in the Church today to mete out punishment like that. It all fell on Jesus, and we follow Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

Unfortunately, we have seen in history where people have taken these things out of context, and due to their own pride, their own greed, their own covetousness and things of that nature, they have been corrupted and done things that were damaging and more painful; but in this situation, it is a great reminder for us to know that all the wrath of God has went onto Jesus and he is the one who takes the punishment...divine punishment for that thing. Sin actually has its own consequences, and the Lord knows in his wisdom what is needed to be exacted there, and it doesn't need to fall into our hands; but the good news is that God teaches us and shows us through these historical pictures the symbols and the obedient measures we need to take so that we can walk as Christians who love the Lord and serve him in the best way we can.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because of Jesus, we know that the other nations of the earth, as it were, they are not going to be conquered in the future; they are going to be loved, forgiven...they will welcome...

DARRELL DELANEY

Restored.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; they will be welcomed into the kingdom of God. They will bring their treasures with them, we see in John's vision in the book of Revelation; but the main thing is, this is all about God, Darrell, and this is all

about fulfilling what he promised Abram way back in Genesis 12: You are going to be a nation from which I will launch the salvation of all the nations. That is why that, unlike probably every marauding army in history, and certainly of their day, Israel couldn't keep anything for themselves. This was all about God. They couldn't take the silver and the gold. It was all devoted to God. The spoils of war were not up for grabs, because this is all at God's direction, for God's purpose, not to enrich individuals.

DARRELL DELANEY

The goal was not to plunder; the goal was to bring glory to God by following his divine instructions. God can use anyone when they follow his instructions, as he did with Rahab, and we are going to harken back to that in Joshua 2, where he spoke to Rahab here, and it says in verse 22: Joshua said..., "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." ²³So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel. ²⁵[But] Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day. So, they kept their promise. They actually did say they would spare her, and they did.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And as we also noted in the second program of this series, Rahab did dwell among the Israelites, and actually became a member of Israelite society; and eventually became a great, great, great grandmother to King David, and through that, a direct ancestor of no less than Jesus himself, as Matthew will remind us in the opening family tree in Matthew 1. So, it is a tragic event overall, but Rahab and her family were spared because, you know, of what she had done to the spies; and also, as we saw in the previous program in this series, Darrell, Rahab herself actually became the one who kind of preached a sermon and predicted that this was going to happen: God is going to give you success. So, whatever the spies had been thinking before they met Rahab, after they met Rahab, they thought...they had good reason to think: Wow, God spoke to us through her. This must be real.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God really is with us, and now we have seen that indeed he is. God is the one who knocked down the walls.

DARRELL DELANEY

So then, God will use foolish things to shame the wise, is what we find out in the New Testament. He uses things that people count out, and people think are not going to be used to get glory out of them, but in just a moment, as we wrap up this episode, we will see in Joshua 7 that there is a tragic event that they are going to encounter. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have seen, Darrell, that by trusting in what looked like God's quirky strategy to take the city of Jericho as the first major engagement in the conquest of the Promised Land, the people had the success that defied expectations...it defied their expectations and I am certain it defied the expectations of the people inside Jericho, who didn't think that this weird marching around the city thing could ever work, but then it

does; but then, in Joshua 7, a rather unhappy note gets introduced into this otherwise victorious story.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, in Joshua 7 it picks up and it says: But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

So, he didn't follow the instructions; when Joshua told them to shout, he also told them: Do not take anything; and then Achan does break that rule. He takes something for himself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are told in what you just read there, Darrell, not what you might expect to read, that the Lord's anger burned against Achan; no; the Lord's anger burned against Israel; and it is interesting that, you know, God throughout scripture...and this extends even to the era of the Church, I think, Darrell, God is a God of community. God is not a God just of, you know, one-on-one individual relationships. God always sees the whole family of God...the whole covenant people of Israel. So, Achan is one bad apple. He really has spoiled the whole batch because God's anger is against all Israel. Joshua doesn't know this, though. So, he figures he is on a role: Wow; that was easy! The walls of Jericho melted away like they were made out of, you know, wet clay. So now we are going to go to Ai; that is next on the hit parade. We are going to take Ai. Joshua leads the people, and they get absolutely routed. It is the opposite of Jericho. Joshua cannot figure out what in the world is wrong.

DARRELL DELANEY

Actually, they pick that up in the scripture in verse 19 of Chapter 7. It says: Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and honor him. Tell me what you have done; and do not hide it from me." ²⁰Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." ²²So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, what we didn't read here is that once they are defeated in attacking Ai, Joshua says to God: What?! Where did you go? And God says: I didn't go anywhere. You got a problem. And so, they narrow it down to [Judah,] the tribe of Achan, and then eventually they narrow it down to Achan; and he confesses. I mean, he doesn't make any excuses. He tells Joshua straight up what happened; but those of us familiar with the story know that Achan and his family, to put it mildly, they meet a bad end. They get executed...they get stoned to death...and we don't want to get overly moralistic about this rather sad story, but it is certainly, Darrell, a testament to the power of temptation, and particularly the temptation to covet.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, of course we know from our series on the Ten Commandments that coveting is wanting what other people have, and God is against it. He told them to not covet their husbands, their wives, their spouses, their neighbor's things, their servants, any of that stuff. They are not supposed to covet and want what other people have, and Achan broke that rule; and he didn't realize that his sin would affect the community; and so, I think that even though we are not looking at this moralistically speaking, we do need to think about how our sin is not just going to affect us. It might affect people around us in unforeseen consequences that we cannot really calculate, and sometimes that does happen.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Achan probably thought like we do: Ah, nobody is going to get hurt if I do this. Nobody will notice, right? It is just a little insurance for a rainy day, you know; who knows how things are going to go in this new Promised Land. I might need this silver, gold, and you now, my wife someday might like this nice

Babylonia robe. So, you know, what is the harm? But of course, God saw it and his initial response, as we said, wasn't just to make life a little difficult for Achan. All the people suffered for it; and so, certainly, I think, it is a cautionary tale of what can happen when we start cutting corners morally.

DARRELL DELANEY

When we cut corners morally, I think that we are starting to take our total dependence away from God, who promised to provide for us and take care of us; and we put that on ourselves; and then we become kind of like Jacob, who was the trickster, who was like putting spots on these sheep to take them with him and try to make his own blessing when God's whole plan was to bless him; but then sometimes we try to make our own contingency plans when they are not really needed. It shows a lack of faith in our Lord, and this is one of the reasons why I think Achan was punished.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, it is not that we do grand-scale things. Most of us, you know, we are pretty good and pretty upright people. We don't do grand-scale larceny or murder, you know...but we just do little things, you know; we tell a little white lie, and we convince ourselves: Well, it just makes life better for everybody if I lie. We think that we are justified when we snap somebody's head off and just speak cruelly to them. What we end up doing, Darrell, is bit by bit we take God's moral fences and we move them...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So that life is more convenient for me. You know, I think of the parable of the lost sheep. They say that a sheep doesn't usually get lost because it just runs away all at once. Sheep nibble themselves lost. Oh, that grass is greener—that grass is greener—nibble, nibble—nibble, nibble; then all of a sudden, the sheep looks around and it is like: Whoa, where did the shepherd go?

DARRELL DELANEY

I'm lost.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I'm lost; I think it goes that way in our lives.

DARRELL DELANEY

And you know, I was thinking about how we often drift. You know, it is not that we always intentionally go off the deep end; and Jesus says that it is the little foxes...the ones that actually get you off course...the ones that knock you a few degrees off of center; and then, down the road you are like how did I even get here? There are some people who actually get in those circumstances and they realize that. But that is what happens when you have challenges and you don't acknowledge the temptations that are in you that you can confess; and you realize, too, that if you acknowledge the Lord, he can actually help you; but the plan is for him to bless you the whole time, and you don't need to make your own shortcuts.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I think the lessons of Joshua 6 and 7 that we have seen here, Darrell, is trust God with all your heart, even if God's ways don't make sense; they are not as obviously successful as the worldly ways; trust God, because, you know, the whole of the Christian life is a constant dying and rising, dying and rising with Christ. As Paul put in Galatians 5: We try to keep step with the Spirit. We know we fail sometimes; thankfully, unlike Achan, we don't have to face the death penalty for that. We are forgiven; but we are called again to be not only forgiven as baptized people, but renewed people; and by the Holy Spirit, that is possible day in and day out as we keep step with Jesus in the Spirit. So, thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we study more stories of Israel's battles as they conquer the land God promised them.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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