

Meet the Commander, Jeshua!
Joshua 5:13 – 6:5

I'm sorry I had to leave you for two weeks after dropping that heavy word on you. If you recall two weeks ago we saw in the Joshua 4 that the younger generation had not been circumcised. I speculated that the older generation did not want to do that when they were such a poor example of what it meant. God did not want the younger ones to follow their example of outward ritual without a heart change. When the heart is circumcised – everything is different! The purpose for living is no longer self. We can't bother with meaningless arguments defending our rights because we have a more important calling. We live to proclaim the wonder of being born into the Family of God. I'm sorry if you were offended by mentioning the past. As pastor I hear expressions and words that are not loving toward those who have left I realize there is not the love Christ wants us to have toward our brothers. Surely, we all have things situations in which we need to get it right with God and have a godly attitude toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. The more we are right with God, the more permission we give the Holy Spirit to move among us and bring in the needy, and some of the neediest are the youth.

If the younger generation is not here because we have failed to be the examples we can be, we need to repent and change. Repent isn't a nasty word. It means to have a turn around in my attitude, and then to act on it. What can we do to see the next generation pick up the banner and represent Christ and His life-transforming Kingdom? In the weeks to come I hope we have some practical suggestions about how to connect with the younger generation. Ida has been an example to us in connecting with Trish. I think it has to do with expressing that unconditional love of the LORD that says, "I'm here for you no matter what. You don't have to be just like me, but I have some eternal truths to share with you. You can express them in your own way, but let me, little by little, share with you about the wonder of Jesus in my life."

Now, if He isn't that real to you, the first thing is to get real with God yourself. You can't share what you don't have. I tried to share Jesus for years without letting him be the LORD of my life. It doesn't work. Oh, God in His mercy may have a few people touched and affected, but people see through your efforts. Those efforts aren't anointed by the Holy Spirit and that makes all the difference. They aren't anointed because of compromise in your life. But when Jesus is Lord over all you are and do, then the power of the Spirit comes with your words. There is that punch of conviction that isn't about delivery style, but about a life that lives what it's preaching. The words aren't from head knowledge but from living experience. Young people connect with that! As we get into the New Year, we will have more on welcoming young people and how to reach out to them. They are our future. Without them, we have not succeeded in passing on our faith.

One way you can touch the Verde Valley is by supporting the only Christian High School, Cornerstone. Their goal is to raise up young Christian leaders. The Arizona Tax Credit costs you absolutely nothing. You just give what the state would charge you for State Taxes to Cornerstone. Remember, that isn't sacrifice. That is just

doing what we ought to do. When we have fundraisers at the High School, I'd love to see half of Wayside there because we have a vision and a passion for passing on our faith. Right now I'm lucky to get two people to come. I hope that doesn't offend you, but that is the result over the past year. "Well, I have this thing and that to go to." Yes, but is it anywhere near as important, in the light of eternity, as these young people taking our place in presenting Jesus to the world He died for? Am I putting you on a guilt trip? Well, guilt is the weight of the Holy Spirit to motivate us to change. Remember, we can't keep on doing the same thing and expect different results – that is the definition of insanity. If we want to see young people come to Christ and be set free from the world, we have to do something different. Let's keep that in prayer, asking the LORD to show us His plan not a formula of man.

I've really felt led to address a few other issues that I keep hearing second hand. The best way to deal with issues is to be honest and forthright with everyone. We don't need any secrets because we are one body. The Scriptures tell us to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Sometimes we will have a group dissatisfied with one thing or another. It is bound to happen. What do we do? First, bring it to the LORD. Is it worth making an issue over? Is it fundamental to our faith or just my personal preference? Then, if you think it is of legitimate concern, bring it to the leadership of the church, respecting the church structure. If they agree, there will be change. If not, set it aside and die to self to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

The issues that keep coming up are music. A few people would like to return to hymns only with piano and organ. That is a personal style preference. It was brought up to the elder board 8 months ago and we determined to continue in the blended style. It is harder than picking just traditional or contemporary, but it includes everyone and shows love towards all. That is good for us. I have always been open to having the organ played, but the board decided not to hire a special organist. Just a few weeks ago I found out Norma Shirley can play the organ so I immediately asked her if she would play. She is preparing to.

Issues that come up or that I hear rumblings about I will address before everyone so that all will know what decisions are made. The appropriate boards have the final say. Then we all need to set aside our personal preference and enjoy worshipping the LORD together in love as Jesus has commanded us to do. He set the example by forsaking heaven and dying to self daily to live in a culture among men. We need to follow His example, so that we can worship in love and unity. If someone comes to you to complain about something, encourage them to take it to the appropriate board and trust the LORD for the outcome. Let us not put up with political factions, divisions over man's preferences, or such worldly ways. Let's rise above that in Christ and show the world we can worship together in peace and love because of what Jesus has done in us. Amen?

Let's return to our study in Joshua:

Josh 5:13-15 (NIV) *13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 "Neither," he replied, "but as*

commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" 15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Joshua had probably heard Moses tell the story of the burning bush a hundred times. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy!" Now he was hearing those words with his own ears.

We must remind ourselves over and over that this is not just a great story, but history. General Joshua is about to begin the conquest of the Promised Land, about to fulfill the ancient promises to Abraham, and there in front of him is a man. This is no ordinary man, this is none other than Jesus in a pre-incarnate appearance. God is a spirit, and when we see a visible form of God, we are seeing Jesus. Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." John 14:9 In other words, "I'm the only way you can see God." The Jews recognize that Scripture declares a visible God and so they have called Him the Prince of the Countenance. In His face, we see God.

What an incredible meeting! Joshua is the name in Hebrew of the Aramaic 'Jesus'. "Yeshua (transliteration of the Hebrew we call Joshua) meet Yeshua! You've served Him most of your life, heard His voice and here He is standing in front of you, Commander of the armies of Heaven."

We need to meet the living God in the face of Christ Jesus! Joshua falls on his face. That always happens when man meets God. Only in the incarnation when His glory was laid aside for us could man treat the Son of God like an ordinary man and stand in His presence. But remember in the Garden when He said, "I am" all the soldiers fell to the ground. Although He is still all man and all God, forever in physical form to bear the marks of the New Covenant, He has clothed Himself again in glory. John saw Him in the Revelation and ...fell on His face. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror. Then we will see face to face. That ought to sober us, but sometimes we just read it like a good story. It's going to happen very soon! You will see Jesus in His glory!

I'm not as anxious to see Jesus face to face as some of you are. I want to be a whole lot more like Him before He calls me home. I will have to give an account of my words, an account of the gifts He invested in me. What did I do with the Son who gave Himself for me? This glorious One I will meet face to face set aside His glory to live as a man and die as a criminal. What did I do with that? I say, "Well, a received the gift of salvation." But He says He came to be LORD of all. Is He the LORD, the Master, the Director of my life? Do I value His communion and allow His presence to touch the world around me or am I selfishly living as I will? I will meet Him face to face and give an account. You will meet Him face to face and give an account. Yes, all our sins are covered by His blood, but what did we do with the freedom from sin? Where are the earnings from His investment? (Matthew 25:14-30) Still so anxious to meet Him face to face?

His eyes are full of love but they are a flame of fire that will see your inmost thought and pierce your soul through and through. His hair is white as snow. A golden sash is around his chest. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of a raging river. (Revelation 1:12-15) Still so anxious to meet Him face to face? I long to, and yet I quake at the thought. This is no mere story, it is a glimpse into our future.

We must meet Jesus. The more you meet Him now, the less of a shock it will be then, and that is why I want more time. I'm not ready. I want know I did everything His heart desired without question or hesitation.

General Joshua asks a very serious question. Are you for us or for our enemies? Hey, whichever side you are on, I want to be on that side. I sure don't want to be opposed to You. The greater your revelation of Jesus, the more you want to be sure you are on the right side in all your allegiances in life. The Man answers, "Neither!" He hasn't come to fight for your agenda, or their agenda, but the everlasting agenda of God Almighty. The man says, "As the Captain of the armies of heaven I have come." I'm here to execute the will of God. I'm here to give orders. We better quit thinking the Lord is on our side on any issue and examine our heart to see if we are His humble servants. He doesn't take sides in men's issues, He commands, and we'd better obey. Then He proceeds to tell Joshua the battle plan of God.

We have to get God's battle plan if we are going to be successful. We have to march to the sound of the voice of the LORD if we are going to see Him work. Man has books on exactly how to take your city for God. If that worked, all the cities in the world would be won already. We have to meet with the Captain and get His direction. What are we going to do to win the youth to the Lover of their souls? We have to get His directions. What are we going to do to see Sedona come to Jesus? I heard several New Agers declare this to be their town. Sorry, I've already claimed it for Jesus! You and I sit at the right hand of the Throne of God in heaven in Christ Jesus. That is the place of power and authority. From that place I speak down to the earth and say, "This town belongs to Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6) Now all we have to do is ask the Commander what His plan is to make it happen.

Josh 6:1-5 (NIV) 1 Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. 2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. 3 March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. 4 Have 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. 5 When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in." God does the wildest, most unimaginable things, so that we know it is all God and so that He gets all the glory. They were on the way to fight the battle as man would fight it when God interrupted them with His plan. His plan is always best. They were to walk around the city once every day for six days. The seventh day they walked around seven times and then blew a long blast on the ram's horn, give a battle cry shout, and march right over the wall that will fall down.

Joshua could have said, "That old goat meat pizza I ate last night is causing me to hear things!" I thought for sure you said we should just blow a trumpet and the walls would fall down. We might have a hard time believing the direction God gives us. Remember, it is so God will get the glory and not man. If we have any success at all, it is not me, it is not you, it is not a method, it is the LORD God who can even use us in spite of ourselves.

But do you have the faith to march? I think there are enough of us that do. Now we just need to hear our marching orders. Since I talked about reaching the youth, I had someone unrelated to our church walk up to me and ask, "What are we going to do about our youth. We are losing them!" They had no idea what I preached last Sunday. We are going to pray and ask God for His marching orders. Will you? We need to hear from God. As scary as it is, we need to meet with the Captain of the army of Heaven.

Don't forget, first, our hearts must be circumcised, tender to His voice, to His will for us. We must celebrate Passover, our deliverance from bondage of the flesh. When we are ready to ask God for His agenda, He can speak to us and tell us what unimaginable way He is going to reach the youth. Then He'll tell us our little part in seeing it happen, and the walls of generations will come tumbling down. We sang, "The Battle Belongs to the LORD" a quote from 2 Chronicles 20. It is true when we talk about opening the eyes of the blind and introducing people to Jesus as our loving LORD. The battle is His. We just get to participate in some small way. We march around. Blow a trumpet, shout, and walk in take what the LORD has given us. That shout was a war cry. The armies of that day often raised up a shout as they charged into battle. It put fear into the hearts of the enemy. When we together speak victory, we voice our faith and God is honored. That strikes fear into the hearts of the enemy.

What a different attitude that new generation had! The old generation was afraid of giants in the land. The new were ready to do the craziest things at the command of God and believed God would bring victory. It is not about the odds. God declares in His word that He can save by many or by few. Over and over again He chose the weak and the humble to bring victory. Don't be intimidated! Keep your eyes on Jesus! Have faith in God.

But first – Stand before your Commander and receive His instruction. Let us trust that if this burden to see youth won, to see this town changed is of God, that He will surely show us His plan if we will get on our face before Him, take off our shoes, and there on holy ground hear His plan of attack. Can we do that? Will you ask God to speak to your hearts about what we should do? As you read the word watch for Him to speak to you? I don't believe all vision comes from the pastor. Jesus is the head of the church. He can show you as well as he can me. Let us hear His voice together and follow His instruction.

You know it is His will to reach the youth for He commanded us to pass on our faith to our children and our children's children. Thus, we can believe He will answer our

prayers for we are praying according to His will. Let's meet often with our Commander and get His direction for taking this city for Christ.

Let me just give you a preview of what I think the Lord has shown me about His plan. First, I believe we need to be willing to have a broken heart for the lost, and a broken heart over our apathetic condition. Once we are right with God, we can receive His heart for the needy, His compassion for the lost.

Prayer, we are going to have to become the House of Prayer that God means us to be. We need to realize how much is accomplished through prayer and learn to pray God's will with authority.

Proclaim, we need to proclaim the Word of God in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. That comes when we are living what we preach and willing to lay down our lives.

That leaves a lot of detail to be filled in. Together, let's hear from the Commander and get our marching orders. Amen?

Let's meet with the Commander right now. The Bible teaches that when we agree on something there is great power. (Matthew 18:19-20) If, together, we voice the will of God - watch things change. I'm asking you to voice your agreement by saying "Yes" after each line, if you do agree as I pray this prayer.

LORD Jesus, we need to get our direction from You.
Without You we are nothing.
In You we have power and authority to ask that Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Please break us out of our apathy.
Please give us Your compassion for the lost and needy.
Please show us how to reach the youth of our families and of this city.
Please touch this city with a hunger for You alone.
We will give You all the honor for what You will do here.
In Jesus' name!

The Lord bless you this week as you bow before Him to hear His marching orders.