

God's Might Tumbles Jericho's Walls: Shout! God Is Mighty! – Joshua 6:1-20

This week at Vacation Bible School we learned how God is our mighty fortress because in Jesus, the victory is won. Our first Bible lesson taught us how our God once broke down the mighty walls of a city called Jericho not with catapults or battering rams, but with his mighty power.

The people of Jericho trusted in the strength of their walls. When God's Old Testament people—the Israelites—miraculously crossed the flooded Jordan River into Jerusalem, the city of Jericho stood between them and the land that God had promised would be theirs. It controlled the region. So the people of Jericho fled behind their big, strong walls, but they didn't realize they were facing the mighty power of the true God.

God's plan to take the city defied military strategy. The Israelites were not supposed to besiege the city or fight the armies of Jericho. They were simply to march around the city once each day for six days. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times. Then with the blast of a trumpet, they weren't supposed to storm the city. They were to shout at the city—and what do you know? God's mighty power crushed those manmade walls in his almighty hands. God gave his people the victory over their enemies that day and later gave them the rest of the Promised Land.

We face enemy challenges too—challenges that come from the sinful natures within us, from the sinful world around us, from Satan, and from death. Like the people of Jericho, we're tempted to trust in our own strength. But what happens? We have fears and troubles. We're tempted. We sin. On our own, we cannot face those big, intimidating enemies, let alone knock them down. Yet our God is mighty! Amazingly, our God doesn't use our strength at all to save us. In fact, his plan to save us defies logic! God sent his only Son Jesus to fight the battle for us and win the victory against our enemies. Now our mighty God promises to be with us and fight for us. He has the power to knock the fears out of our lives, giving us his victory, his forgiveness, his strength, and his love. God is our Mighty Fortress, our Defense, our Shield, and our Savior in whom we take refuge!

Hear now a reading from Joshua 6.

God Delivers King Hezekiah's Kingdom: Fear Not! – 2 Kings 19:1-7

On our second day of Vacation Bible School we jumped forward in history 700 years to the time of a faithful king named Hezekiah. We find Hezekiah standing on the walls of his capital city of Jerusalem looking out at a most terrifying sight. The valleys and hills surrounding his city were covered with the tents of the mighty, ruthless armies of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians controlled most of the known world at that time. They were well-known for their brutality. They had destroyed the northern kingdom of the Israelites' cousins, scattering them into exile never to return. Now the Assyrians stood at the gates of the city of Jerusalem, where they mocked King Hezekiah and the true God of Israel. Destruction was coming, so you can't blame Hezekiah for being so afraid. But what did our mighty God do? He removed Hezekiah's fear. Not only did the Lord reassure Hezekiah, but that very night he wiped out the armies of Assyria sending their king and any survivors fleeing back to their home country.

It's tough to be a little guy facing a big enemy. That was King Hezekiah against the Assyrians. No matter what the little guy does, the big guy always seems to ask for more, but what was God's solution? God promised, "Fear not. Trust me. I will act." He did, and he does.

We are under daily attack by those bullies—Satan, sin, and our broken world. Their attacks make us afraid, but like Hezekiah, we can turn to God in faith. He is our refuge and strength. We can rely on him for help. As he did with defeating Jericho, God's solution doesn't necessarily make sense, but he removes our fears! He sent Jesus to defeat our biggest enemies. He strengthens us in faith through his Word and his Supper. He listens to and answers our prayers. He defends us against all danger. He guards and protects us from all evil. So what do we have to fear? Why be afraid? Take refuge in God, our mighty Savior!

Hear now a reading from 2 Kings 19.

God's Word Reforms King Josiah: God's Word Is True and Powerful – 2 Kings 23:1-3

On our third day of Vacation Bible School, we visited the time of the last faithful king of Israel—a man named Josiah. Josiah followed two very wicked kings who had abandoned the Word of God and had led the people

¹ Some of the thoughts and language of these introductions were received with thanks from the "A Mighty Fortress" VBS Director's materials – © 2017 Concordia Publishing House. Used with permission.

away from the true God and his Word. The temple of the Most High God in Jerusalem had fallen into disrepair. The sacrifices to God had stopped, and the Word was lost. God's judgment was coming for Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, but then God raised up faithful Josiah. The young king began a major renovation project on God's temple. Lo and behold, the high priest discovered the Book of God's holy Law—dusty and hidden and neglected. When it was read to Josiah, he realized how greatly he and his people had sinned against God because they had neglected his Word. He repented. He turned from his sins and the Lord spoke his Word of comfort for his soul with forgiveness through a Savior who would come through Josiah's family line. The joy of that forgiveness moved Josiah to have his entire kingdom gather in Jerusalem where he personally read the Word to them. From then on, Josiah sought to do what was right in God's sight restoring the Word of God in the lives and homes of his people and reforming the spiritual lives of the people he served as king.

God's true and powerful Word shows us our sin too. We don't do what God says to do. We don't fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We don't truly love our neighbor. We fail to do what is right in God's sight, but God's Word also shows us our Savior Jesus, through whom every one of our sins is forgiven.

God's true Word has the power to change our lives. Through His Word, God gives us faith and renews our whole life. As his children, we seek to serve our neighbor through the various callings in life that our God has given us—parents and children, husbands and wives, neighbors and citizens and friends, teachers and students, employers and employees. We seek to give God glory even as we long to be with him in heaven. What a precious gift, then, is God's true and powerful Word! *Hear now a reading from 2 Kings 23.*

King Jesus Enters Jerusalem: Jesus Comes to Save! – Luke 19:28-40

On Day 4, we followed Jesus as he began the last week of his earthly life. In this lesson, people praised Jesus and called out, "*Hosanna! Lord, save us!*", when they saw him. They wanted him to use his mighty power to save them from enemy rule under the Romans. Yet Jesus didn't come to Jerusalem the way people expected the King of kings to come. In fact, only God would have planned his saving victory this way.

Every other king sends out soldiers into battle to fight on his behalf. This King, however, went into battle by himself to fight on your behalf. He didn't ride on a stallion with shiny armor, but humbly on an ordinary donkey. Jesus didn't come to save his people by using the sword like other kings. Instead, Jesus came to bring victory by overcoming sin, death, and the devil through his sacrificial death on the cross and his victorious resurrection. Jesus came to bring peace between God and humanity through his work for us.

Like the crowd who welcomed Jesus, we tend to praise Jesus on Sunday, but forget about him during the week. We think he should give us what we want rather than what we need. Then we doubt his love when things don't go as we hoped. We end up rejecting him by our words and actions. We sin, but thanks be to God! Jesus came to save us! He rode into Jerusalem on that donkey so he could die on the cross to pay for our sins and rise again. Through Jesus, we have forgiveness, life, and salvation. Today Jesus comes to us through his Word, through the waters of Baptism, and through his Supper to give us those gifts. Jesus comes to save us!

Hear now a reading from Luke 19.

Jesus Wins the Victory: Jesus Is Our Savior King! – Luke 24:1-12

On our final day of Vacation Bible School, we followed Jesus to the cross and the empty tomb. We learned that Jesus is our Savior King! You see, on our own, we can't win. Our sin defeats us every day, and Satan cheers. On our own, we would remain in our sins, but Jesus steps in and Satan flees. Why? Our God is mighty. He can knock down the troubles in our lives. Above all, he gives us the victory over our enemies through Jesus! We have no need to fear! God is our refuge and strength. We turn to him for help. We know his Word is true and powerful. God works through that Word to give us faith and power to serve in his kingdom. We do that in praise of Jesus, who came to save us from our sins. We praise him for winning the victory over sin, death, and the devil for us!

That's what we learned throughout the week, but in our last lesson, we learned that Jesus is our Savior King. We learned how Jesus laid down his life and rose again to save us, to forgive our sins and give us life. Now as King, Jesus rules with his almighty power over all creation and with his gracious love for our good. He guides our lives and protects us here on earth and will bring us and all believers to the glories of heaven where we will receive the crown of life. So let's tell everyone the great news that Jesus is our Savior who overcame sin and death! In Jesus, the victory is won!

Hear now a reading from Luke 24.