

Sermon for January 29, 2012

BMZ Church

Text: Joshua 5:13-15

Title: "My Faith is a Private Issue"

Introduction: How we doing, BMZ? I hope and pray that you all are well ... here and from wherever you are worshipping with us online! Over the past three weeks we have been working our way through a worship series called, "4 Lies Heard at Church". The idea is that there are things that have seeped into the Church from culture that Christians have been tricked into believing. They are lies. Lies come from the father of all lies and deserve to be treated as such by followers of Jesus Christ. Review the 1st three lies...

The first week, the lie heard around churches and church people is, "God Will Never Put More on You Than You Can Handle". That's a LIE! "God will not TEMPT you more than you can handle", but there are pressures and happenings in life that overwhelm us and we are at a loss and we can't function anymore. In those moments when we CAN'T HANDLE IT, we are invited by God to rely on God's strength and gain courage. If we could HANDLE IT ourselves, then we would get the GLORY... Life is NOT about OUR GLORY. Life is about GOD GETTING THE GLORY and more people TURNING to GOD.

Then, we talked about the lie that is heard in many churches, but specific to ours, "BMZ Just Wants Your Money". That's a lie. As we talk about Biblical giving and tithing, we talk about what BMZ/Church wants FOR you (many blessings to those who give with true hearts); not, FROM you! God wants us to experience a freedom and a fulfilled life and that includes getting on GOD'S ECONOMY and not trying to just live out life on HUMAN ECONOMY. That includes giving 10% of your income back to "the home storehouse"/ BMZ Church (Malachi 3). Remember Jesus is married to the Church, not Red Cross... See, giving and tithing is not about a church budget, it's about our hearts! If we are convinced of that LIE (and we know that Jesus called Satan the Father of All Lies), we won't get our hearts right with Jesus! If we are convinced that the Church just wants our money, we have AN EXCUSE NOT to be OBEDIENT to GOD!

Last week, we hit Lie #3; which I like to call the "Disney Lie" ... this is heard in Church and in our culture often and it is spoken as a TRUTH ... "Just Follow Your Heart" ... to make your dreams come true, "Just Follow Your Heart". Listen, one of the best ways to make sure that your life is NOT in any way "DREAMY" is to FOLLOW YOUR HEART! We talked about how in Jeremiah 17 we are reminded that our hearts are SICK! They are wicked and deceitful and if we follow our hearts they will lead us to SICK and WICKED places. We, as developing followers of Jesus aren't supposed to "Follow Our Hearts"; we are supposed to Follow God's Heart!

If you missed any of these, you can listen to them or watch them on our website...

Before we get into the LAST LIE in the Series ...Next week: Big Day (Invest and Invite Cards!)- New Series: We are going to reveal when the end of the world is coming... We have gathered precise information and are ready to share that with all of you. It's "2012: It's The End of the World As We Know It". You do not want to miss this 5 week series ... ANY of it! Especially, the 1st week. Do me a favor ... Take the "Invest and Invite Cards" seriously. The more people we get to come through these doors, the more people hear the Word of God, the more people learn that life here can be different, and the more people we get through the doors ... the more people in The Kingdom! Write 'em down and pray for them and then be bold enough to ASK!!!

If you haven't already, I invite you to take out your message notes and merge card if you haven't already... On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline walking us through our Scripture. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... I would love to have you take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, take this home and refrigerate it. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you watching on-line, you can hit the button for notes and for MERGE CARD and stick with us. If you are watching/listening later, or IPODing; you can download the outline off of our website so you too can take notes.

Let's take a moment to PRAY and then we will get at the 4th LIE!

PRAY NOW!

The last LIE we are going to talk about in this series, as we have connected them to Old Testament stories and characters, is what many say ... and the lie that keeps many from coming to worship with other followers of Jesus in a church setting. Here it is: "My Faith is a Private Matter". "I don't talk about my faith". "That's just between me and God". "I believe in God, but I just don't go to church ... too many hypocrites there".

Here's the thing: I think that us taking time to talk about the LIE that "OUR FAITH IS A PRIVATE MATTER" just might lead some of you here to some sort of break-through in your faith journey. This morning might push you closer to Jesus. I hope so! I pray so!

So, here we go ... Joshua Chapter 5...

Joshua 5:13 = "*When Joshua was near the town of Jericho... (Stop!)*" Two things we need to get from this before we move on ... 1st = Joshua. Joshua... An ordinary guy / average man. Sometimes we think we have to be some sort of super-Christian or super-spiritual person. God's looking for ordinary people who believe that God can do whatever God says He'll do! That was Joshua ... ordinary guy who trusted that God is Who He said He is!

2nd = Jericho. If you want to know what happens with Joshua and Jericho, I have down to read Joshua Chapter 6 (Merge Card Next Step) -- Great Story! The Hebrew people have been out in the wilderness for 40 years with Moses. They have now entered their Promised Land and Joshua is the new leader. God told him that the land would be theirs, but they would have to fight for it. Their first major obstacle was the City of Jericho ... great fortress that had been there for hundreds of years. God's Battle Plan = Marching around the city blowing horns for 6 days ... 7 times on the 7th day ... loud blast and down come the walls and you get to go kill everybody! And they did! God did something incredibly SIGNIFICANT at Jericho through JOSHUA!

Once Joshua listened to God and did what God said in Jericho, Joshua was never the same. People talked about Joshua... "That man follows God!" "Hey, kids, look--that's Joshua. He follows the Lord!" etc. Joshua trusted God!

Here's what I think ... and I'm excited! Some of you might be very near your Jericho! Some of you are so close to totally putting your trust in Jesus; and when you do, your life will never be the same!

Some of us think we have figured out that Jesus came so that we could pray a prayer and end up in heaven after this life (Next Week = We will tell you when that's going to happen... The End of the World). BUT, I think we miss that Jesus promised us more than that. Jesus hung on a cross, not only so we could experience ETERNAL LIFE, but so we could experience ABUNDANT LIFE! Jesus said that he came that our "joy might be full" ... we would lead fulfilling and abundant lives here on earth; IN THIS LIFE!

How many of you here would like to experience just a little more ABUNDANCE in this life?? How many of you would like life to be a little more fulfilling??

If we want to go to the "Next Level" in our faith and in this life, we have to do some things (3 that we learn from Joshua):

Go to the next level... Number One = If you want to go up to the next level in your Journey with Jesus ... Recognition must take place!!

I. #1 = Recognition

- A. Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't know who you were talking to? When I was a kid, CB radios were very popular ... not just with truckers. many people had them... My Dad had one in each of his cars just so we could listen in and talk to people / truckers. It was pretty cool! My Dad's handle was "Little Devil" because he drove Peugeots. The emblem for the Peugeot is what looks like a small devilish thing. My Dad would be talking to a trucker for awhile and then ask my Dad, "If you're not a trucker, what do you do for a living?" "I'm a pastor." Dead Silence... didn't realize WHO THEY WERE TALKING TO and were trying to remember everything they might have said that they need to apologize for.
- B. Back to our Scripture ... V. 13 = ¹³ *When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and demanded, "Are you friend or foe?"*¹
- C. So, here's what is going on here: Joshua is the leader of the Hebrew people into the Land Promised by God to their people. He needs to lead them to a victory over the City/Fortress of Jericho. Not sure how that's going to happen... He doesn't know what to do next, so he's out walking by himself and thinking and maybe seeking God's wisdom ... and HE LOOKED UP! If you want to move forward in your faith, at some point, you have to LOOK UP!
- D. He looks up and sees a Man with his SWORD DRAWN! Now, in that age, drawing one's sword was not something that was a joke. A drawn SWORD was an act of aggression. A drawn SWORD was saying, "It's time to fight right now!" So, Joshua goes up to the Man and says, "Are you on our side or on their side? Because, if you are on our side, you better put that sword away and start acting like a soldier! And, if you are on their side ... "Hello. My name is Indigo Montoya ... prepare to die!" ... "EITHER WAY ... get your act together, Mister!"
- E. Remember, Joshua is THE LEADER of the Hebrew people and God has already told Joshua that they are going to take over this land ... Joshua is feeling kind of confident ... he's down to business! Joshua is demanding that this Man "PICK A SIDE"!
- F. Listen to the Man's response (with sword still drawn), ¹⁴ *"Neither one," he replied. "I am the commander of the LORD's army."*² Now, there are different scholars who say that One with the drawn sword was an angel. Others say it was God / Jesus. I'm going with, this is an Old Testament appearance by Jesus! Who else could possibly command "The Lord's Army", except "The Lord"?!?
- G. Here's how Joshua responds ... (v.14b) = ¹⁴ *"Neither one," he replied. "I am the commander of the LORD's army." At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?"*³ RESPONSE?? FACE PLANT!!

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. (3rd ed.) (Jos 5:13). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. (3rd ed.) (Jos 5:14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. (3rd ed.) (Jos 5:14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

- H. In that moment, Joshua recognized with WHOM he was speaking! Joshua was asking Jesus to pick a side! Jesus answer?? "You don't ask me to pick a side ... I am the side!" You pick which side, Joshua!
- I. I wonder how many times we demand that Jesus pick OUR SIDE ... do what we want to do ... instead of just recognizing that He is the great WARRIOR KING OF KINGS (Sword Drawn) and LORD OF LORDS and we'd better stop demanding things of Jesus and start FACE PLANTING BEFORE HIM!!
- J. #1 = Recognition ... If we want to go to the NEXT LEVEL in our FAITH, we have to RECOGNIZE JESUS FOR WHO HE IS ... the "COMMANDER"!

II. #2 = Submission

- A. If we want to increase our relationship with God, we have to be willing to SUBMIT to God! In other words, HIS WORD Counts!
- B. Isn't it amazing that, for the most part, we won't argue with any so-called EXPERT in their field, but we will argue with ALMIGHTY GOD!?!
- C. We call ourselves "Christians" and Disciples or Followers of Jesus Christ, BUT, there are some things that we want to be in control of... We call Jesus "Lord", but is Jesus actually LORD!?! If Jesus is LORD, then He has control over EVERYTHING ... EVERYTHING ... EVERYTHING...If we want to move to the NEXT LEVEL in our faith, we have to SUBMIT EVERYTHING!
- D. Have you ever wondered what it is that is holding you back from being who God wants you to be?? It's easy really ... what is it that you get really MAD ABOUT when I, or someone else, preaches about it?? UPI stuff?? Money and tithing?? If you are getting mad about something that God expects of us ... that will CONTINUE to PREVENT you from moving forward in your FAITH until you get it right ... until you SUBMIT IT to CHRIST!
- E. Joshua = *At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?"*⁴ You're in charge, JESUS. Ask me and I'll do ANYTHING! I AM YOUR SERVANT!!
- F. When was the last time you had that conversation with Jesus?? When was the last time you said to Christ, "I am at your command. What do you want your SERVANT to do??"
- G. Submission in every area of our lives will help us grow closer in relation to Jesus!
#1 = Recognition ... #2 = Submission ... #3 =

III. #3 = Obedience

- A. Listen to what happens with Joshua ... vs. 15 = 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 as he was told.*⁵ I'm sure Joshua was expecting something different when he asked the Lord what He would have Joshua do ... Just, "TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES". That's it?? Not ... Go and defeat the enemy? Not ... Be a great Leader? Just, ... "Take off your shoes"?
- B. If God can't trust us with the little stuff; God can't trust us with the Big Stuff! Just, take off your shoes...

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. (3rd ed.) (Jos 5:14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. (3rd ed.) (Jos 5:15). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

- C. There is a problem with Obedience though... We won't do it for two reasons: Fear and Pride (15). There are times when it is hard (in our eyes and understanding) to follow Jesus. Jesus asks us to do some scary stuff in order to be OBEDIENT. There are times that we realize, If I'm obedient to Jesus on this thing ... somebody is going to get hurt ... and it might be ME!
- D. The other problem is PRIDE. *What will other people think??* How many times does that stop you from doing what you know God wants you to do ... worship, tithe, live with integrity ... people will tell you how silly and backwards you are to follow that "religion stuff". They will tell you that it's all made up and it's just for those people who get suckered in because they think they need something to help cheer them up ... it's nothing more than an emotion ... that religion stuff isn't real!
- E. Jesus says, "Show me by your actions that you "Recognize" Me and that you are "Submitted" to me! Talk is CHEAP! Scripture says that there are MANY who will say, "But I called you Lord and I healed in your name"; and Jesus is going to say, "I never knew you!" More on that next month...
- F. Just "take off your shoes, because you are on holy ground". Good enough for Joshua. It says that he "did what he was told". Oh, I pray that we will become more like that statement when it comes to Jesus ... "And I did what I was told!" Yeah, it was hard ... Yeah, I was scared ... Yeah, I wondered what other people would think, BUT ... I did what I was told!
- G. #1 = Recognition; #2 = Submission and #3 = Obedience.
- H. So, when it comes to our faith in Christ ... where are you at? Do you recognize who Jesus is? Are you willing to SUBMIT to the authority of Jesus? Are you being OBEDIENT, even in THAT AREA of your life ... the area you hold back...
- I. I just want to add one thing about what it takes to go to the NEXT LEVEL in our faith maturity ... that NEXT LEVEL in our relationship with the LORD JESUS CHRIST...
- J. PUBLIC CONFESSION...

IV. BAPTISM / PRAYER (3 Questions)

- A. WHY? Why be baptized? Why publicly give my life to Jesus Christ? Matthew 28:18-20. Go into all the world and MAKE DISCIPLES, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and know that I will be with you!
- B. HOW? How do we baptize? By immersion. How do we pray? Believe, Forgiveness, and Assurance???? And, AFTER THE PRAYER, I Challenge that you tell at least three people within the first 12-24 hours... Allow others to hold you accountable, AND Challenge them in their faith ... you then hold them accountable!
- C. WHO and WHEN? Baptism did not save you as an infant. That was between God and your parents ABOUT you. It says that we are MARKING that Child for Discipleship; not Creating a Disciple. There are 27 references to Baptism in the New Testament. Every one of them happened AFTER people had given their lives over to Jesus.
- D. If you were not saved when you were baptized before... This will not save you, BUT, it is a public confession of our faith in our Savior and LORD, Jesus Christ.

- E. Communion this morning ... symbolic of Who we believe Jesus is as Savior and Lord (Crucified, Buried, Raised and Coming Again). What a great time, if you haven't before, to pray and receive Jesus as your NEW COMMANDER for Life! Reminder: You're in command now. How's that going?
- F. If you want to be Baptized or Re-Dedicated to Your Baptism, we are going to do a Day when it gets warm enough... we will announce that... Let us know that is something you would want to happen.
- G. If you need to pray this morning ... pray with me... (I Believe You are Who You say You are ... Forgiveness offered through the cross ... Be my New Lord ... I'm tired of trying...)

Let's Pray!

Communion:

*Next Steps: Read Joshua 6
Choose a Bible Reading Program at www.bmzchurch.org.
Growth Group Sign-Ups*

Special thanks to NewSpring Church, Craig Groeschel, Andy Stanley and Michael Slaughter for ideas and outlines for this series and message.