

**SERMON NOTES**  
**Joshua 1-6; Luke 14:1-24**  
**“Spiritually Dynamic Retrieving”**

**Intro:**

- **The Lord of the Rings**
- (The Council of Elrond): Council of Wizards, Elves, Dwarves, Humans and Hobbits to decide what to do with the Ring of Power that would enable evil Sauron to destroy all that was good in Middle-earth
  - no one could be trusted to keep the ring without being corrupted by it
  - therefore, it must be carried to the one place where it could be destroyed – Mount Doom – in the very center of Sauron’s dark kingdom
  - Frodo the Hobbit had been commissioned to take the Ring to Rivendell – but the task was not finished – someone needed to take the ring all the way to Mount Doom
  - all agreed that the journey was so dangerous as to seem practically hopeless and there was no plan guaranteeing success – yet there was no other way to conquer the powers of evil and save Middle-earth
  - at the climactic moment: **Frodo:** *“I will take the Ring – though I do not know the way.”*
  - Elrond:** *“I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the Great.”*
- *“I will take the assignment – though I do not know the way”*
- Thus began our vision journey about 18 months ago with an Experiencing God service on August 24, 2008 – with this attitude: *We trust God to work through this visioning process to show us His will – and we trust God to empower us and provide for us to implement the vision step by step as we follow His leadership and obey His directions*
- Now we know the assignment: **“Becoming a spiritually dynamic body making a significant impact in vulnerable families through our neighborhood schools.”**
- *Now it is time to get ready to implement that vision and to become and to do what God is calling us to be and to do over the next 3-5 years*
- The book of Joshua provides a great example of God revealing His vision to Joshua, preparing the people of Israel to carry out that vision, and finally accomplishing that vision by His divine power through His people’s obedience

## I. BECOMING A SPIRITUALLY DYNAMIC BODY

- Lessons from Joshua: *A spiritually dynamic people...*

### *(1) Acknowledges the Vision as God's Work*

- After 40 years of wandering in the desert wilderness, it was finally time for Israel to take possession of the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses' successor, Joshua

**Joshua 1:1 - 5 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: <sup>2</sup>"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup>Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. <sup>5</sup>No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

- *Notice that the vision is not only God-given but is also God's work –*
- *Vision is not something that man initiates or dreams up or plans or accomplishes by human effort*
- *The Lord came to Joshua and spoke to him and gave him the vision of possessing the Promised Land from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean and from Lebanon to the desert east of Egypt*
- *Conquering this vast territory inhabited by powerful nations would not be the accomplishment of Israel and its army*
- *"I will give you this land" says the Lord*
- *"No people will be able to stand up against you because I will be with you."*

**Joshua 10:42 (NIV)** <sup>42</sup>All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

- *Vision is God-given and God-accomplished, and our job is to align ourselves with God's purposes and join Him in His work*
- *Vision comes from God – it shapes the priorities of a church for that season– and it provides energy and inspiration to carry out the assignment God gives us*
- **God has now spoken to us – and His calling for Cornerstone is: *Becoming a spiritually dynamic body making a significant impact in vulnerable families through our neighborhood schools.***

- *Our goal of reaching and making a significant impact in 30 vulnerable families is a God-sized vision that will be accomplished as God works in us and through us*
- That, however, certainly does NOT mean that we are passive in the process of implementing God's vision

**(2) *Is Strong, Courageous, and obedient to the Scriptures***

**Joshua 1:6 - 9 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup>“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. <sup>7</sup>Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

- **God gave Joshua and the people of Israel a God-sized task to do – and strength and courage were required – for *Joshua and the Israelites were standing on the brink of a great adventure***
- *And what was the battle plan that God gave Joshua that day to show him how Israel would conquer the Promised Land?*  
 --there was no plan given to Joshua ahead of time  
 --instead, Joshua was given a command and a promise  
 --the command: *Obey God and His Word – meditate on the Word of God so that you will be careful to do everything written in it – then you will be successful*  
 --the promise: the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go – no one will be able to stand up against you – as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you
- **In order to be strong and courageous and spiritually powerful to expand God's Kingdom into enemy-occupied territory – *we must be strong in the Scriptures***

**Joshua 1:8 (NIV)** <sup>8</sup>Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

**(3) *Follows the Lord***

**Joshua 3:3 - 4 (NIV) Officers:** “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and *follow it*. <sup>4</sup>*Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.* But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

- *The scene of Joshua 3 is the banks of the Jordan River*
- The ark of the covenant, the symbol of the Lord’s presence, was to lead the people across the Jordan River  
--*the people were simply commanded to follow the ark*
- And then, conditional upon following the Lord, the people were given this promise in verse 4: ***Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before***  
--*they were totally dependent on following the Lord – and as they followed the Lord, He would show them the way to go – step by step*
- Frodo: *“I will take the Ring – though I do not know the way”*
- **Vision: *We will accept the assignment the Lord gives us – though we do not know the way since we have never been this way before***
- How will we know which way to go? **Follow the Lord**
- **Oswald Chambers: *Obey God in the thing He shows you, and instantly the next thing is opened up.***
- **God has revealed enough of His vision and direction for us to get started doing what He has spoken to us**
- *He will give us further direction and strategies and plans and methods as we obey Him and put into action what we know to do now*

#### **(4) Pursues Holiness**

**Joshua 3:5** <sup>5</sup>Joshua told the people, “*Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.*”

*To sanctify or consecrate is to set apart as holy for God’s use*

--in the OT, sanctification took place primarily by means of blood sacrifices, anointing with oil, and repentance, prayer & fasting

--*as NT believers, we sanctify ourselves by means of the cleansing power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and by the operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit and*

*the Word of God to set us free from sin, and by means of repentance, prayer and fasting*

- Do we want to see the incomparably great power of the risen and ascended Christ released among us?
- *Then we must set ourselves apart as holy for God's use*
- *We have witnessed an increase measure of God's blessing upon our church since the corporate repentance and cleansing service March 8, 2009*
- **God is pleased when His people come to Him confessing their sins and seeking His cleansing and empowerment**
- *For some of you, pursuing holiness will mean drawing near to God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ*  
 --some of you have been running from the presence of God or avoiding the presence of God or fearing the presence of God because you feel unclean  
**--Jesus Christ has opened the way for you to return to the Father with the assurance that in Christ you are *totally accepted, fully pleasing, deeply loved, completely forgiven, and empowered to live a new life in Christ – because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus***
- *For some of you, pursuing holiness will mean opening yourself to the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life to fill you, control you, direct you, empower you, anoint you, and equip you for God's use in the building of His church and advancement of His kingdom*
- *For some of you, pursuing holiness will mean repentance and a renewed commitment to godly living in accordance with the standards of God's Word*  
 --whether it be getting your financial house in order or committing yourself to sexual purity or getting rid of bitterness or anger or ungodly speech or perhaps working on your marriage or reconciling with a fellow church member  
 --some of you are hindering the flow of God's power in your life by your sinful habits and unwillingness to repent
- *And then for some of you, pursuing holiness will mean devoting yourself to prayer and fasting – pursuing God with a greater intensity and deeper hunger*
- Do we want to see God doing what only God can do in and through our church body?  
 --sanctify yourselves, for the Lord will do amazing things among you

**(5) Submits to the Supreme Authority of the Heavenly Commander-in-Chief**

**Joshua 5:13 - 15 (NIV)** <sup>13</sup>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?” <sup>14</sup>“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?” <sup>15</sup>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.

- We all want to know if God is on our side / if God will bless our plans
- **The question is not: *Is He on our side?* – but rather: *Are we on His side? Are we committed to doing His will and serving His purposes and following His plans***
- Whether the Man with the drawn sword who appeared to Joshua is a high-ranking angel of the Lord or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Himself – He makes it clear that He, not Joshua, is in charge
  - the heavenly Commander in Chief has supreme authority***
  - Joshua was the leader of the people – but he was not in charge
- **Before God’s people are ready to move forward to accomplish God’s purposes, the *Who’s in charge?* issue needs to be settled**
- *If we want to become a spiritually dynamic church body – we must acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of Cornerstone Baptist Church*
- When Joshua asked: “What message does my Lord have for his servant?” – what was the response?
  - “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.”***
  - virtually the same command given to Moses at the burning bush
  - before the Lord gave Joshua the instructions for taking Jericho, God simply wanted Joshua to humbly acknowledge the holiness of the presence of the Lord*
  - worship and surrender precede planning and decision-making and action***
- **A spiritually dynamic body is a church with a passion for worshiping the Lord in the splendor of His holiness**
- Having fallen face down to the ground in reverence before the Commander of the army of the Lord, how did Joshua then express his understanding of who was in charge?
  - “What message does my Lord have for his servant”*

--“*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*”

--**And then Joshua did as he was told**

- You see, if our heart attitude is: *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening... and then I'll evaluate the vision statement, and if it seems reasonable to me and is pretty much in line with what I was thinking, then I'll do what you say*
- If that's our approach, then we are still in charge – we are still leaning on our own understanding rather than submitting to God's agenda

--**then we are using the heavenly Commander in chief as a consultant – whose advice we may or may not choose to follow**

--**but Jesus Christ is not a consultant – He is Lord! He is Head of his body, the church – and what He says, goes**

--*and if we want to become all that He intends for us to be – then we need to learn to line up under His command and submit to His authority and to His Word*

**(6) Employs Spiritual Weapons to win Spiritual Victories to ensure Ministry Success**

- **The Battle of Jericho was not primarily a military battle – it was first and foremost a spiritual battle**
- That was the reason for the mysterious appearance of the Heavenly Commander-in-Chief to Joshua the earthly general
- *And that was the reason for this rather strange battle plan:*

**Joshua 6:2 - 5 (NIV)** <sup>2</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. <sup>3</sup>March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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.”

- **The conquest of the Promised Land would be Yahweh's war – the Promised Land was His land being occupied by His enemies and now He was delivering it to His People**
- *The fall of Jericho would be Yahweh's doing – not Israel's military achievement*
- **Therefore the siege and conquest of Jericho would be led by the Ark of the Covenant and by Israel's priests – not by Israel's soldiers**
- *The Ark of the Covenant and the trumpets were spiritual weapons – not military weapons*

- **The armed soldiers did not engage in battle until the spiritual strongholds were already defeated by spiritual weapons as symbolized by the collapse of the city walls**
- C.S. Lewis: *“There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan”*
- Just as the Promised Land was enemy-occupied territory that needed to be conquered – so also enlarging God’s Kingdom territory today always means taking away territory from Satan
- *There is no neutral ground in the universe*

**Colossians 1:13 (NIV)** <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

- *That kind of rescue work requires winning spiritual victories with spiritual weapons*
- **We will not succeed in reaching and impacting and rescuing 30 vulnerable families through acts of service and good deeds alone**
- *Ministry success will depend on winning spiritual victories with spiritual weapons*
- And what are those spiritual weapons?
- *Chiefly worship and prayer*
- What were the people doing as they were marching around Jericho for 7 days?
- *In contemporary terms: worshiping the Lord and prayer-walking*
- **If we truly believe that this is God’s vision and God’s work that will be accomplished by God’s power and not just by human effort – then we will strive to become a dynamic church in our worship and in our corporate praying**
- We have many good-hearted, compassionate, generous, hard-working, committed people in this church who have a heart for reaching vulnerable families
- **But do we understand that ministry success will depend on winning spiritual victories with spiritual weapons?**
- **The first test will be the May 2 Vision Prayer Kick-off – which will include prayer-walking around neighborhood schools just as Israel prayer-walked around Jericho**

- *Our goal is to have at least 80 people participating in praying for the vision in the sanctuary and prayer-walking around the schools (your choice)*
- ***Spiritually dynamic churches employ spiritual weapons to win spiritual victories to ensure ministry success***

## II. RETRIEVING THE VULNERABLE (Luke 14:1-24)

- Having Jesus as a dinner guest in your home as a Pharisee would be something like having Barack Obama as a dinner guest in your home as a Republican – *you don't really believe in much of what he stands for – but it sure does raise your social standing to have such a celebrity in your home*
- You can be sure this prominent Pharisee host invited all of the prominent people of the town into his home for this social coup of the year
- *Having spoken about the virtue of humility to the upwardly mobile guests at the dinner party, Jesus then had these words for his host:*

**Luke 14:12-14** **“When you put on a luncheon or a dinner,”** he said, **“don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will repay you by inviting you back.”** <sup>13</sup> **Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.** <sup>14</sup> **Then at the resurrection of the godly, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.”**

- The values of the kingdom of heaven turn the values of this world upside down
- **Christ-followers deliberately and intentionally and purposefully invest time and money and resources in ministries and projects that offer no possibility of immediate, tangible payback**
- Jesus’ words were hitting a little too close to home for one of these religious VIPs at the Pharisee’s dinner party – so this religious man changed the subject – in such a way as to highlight his piety and biblical knowledge
- *“Oh yes, Jesus – speaking of dinner parties and wedding banquets – Blessed is the man who will eat at the Messianic feast in the kingdom of God”*
- Taking for granted, of course, that he would be one of those blessed men
- This pious yet rather thoughtless comment prompted Jesus to tell another story – *the Parable of the Great Banquet* – in Luke 14:16-24
- In his wonderful book, *What’s So Amazing About Grace*, Philip Yancey tells this story of a modern day parallel to Jesus’ story:
- *Accompanied by her fiancé, a woman went to the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston to make final arrangements for their wedding reception*

- They had rather expensive tastes, and the bill would come to \$13,000 for an elegant reception
- *That day they gave the Hotel the down payment of \$6,500 for the reception*
- But some time later -- the very day the wedding announcements were to be mailed -- the potential groom got cold feet
- *The wedding and reception would have to be cancelled – or at least postponed*
- Heartbroken – and upset – the bride-to-be returned to the Hyatt to get her refund
- *But the policy allowed for only a 10% refund*
- She would either have to forfeit the rest of the down payment – or go ahead with the banquet
- Though there would be no wedding – the bride decided to go ahead with the banquet
- *You see, 10 years ago, she was living in a homeless shelter*
- She got back on her feet and was now doing very well financially – but she remembered her days as a homeless person
- *So instead of a wedding banquet – she decided to throw an elegant party for the homeless and down-and-outers of Boston*
- She sent invitations to the rescue missions and homeless shelters
- *And they came – bag ladies / vagrants / addicts / elderly / disabled – to feast that night at the Hyatt on chicken cordon bleu and champagne and chocolate wedding cake – all to the music of big-band melodies*
- This is the kind of picture Jesus paints of the Messianic wedding banquet in the coming Kingdom of God
- *A man was planning a great banquet and sent out initial invitations – which were accepted*
- But then when the day of the banquet arrived – and servants were sent to inform the invited guests that it was time for them to come – *the guests began giving excuses why they could not attend*
- **The host became angry at these last-second cancellations – but the food was all prepared and he was determined to go ahead with the banquet**
- *So he ordered his servants to go out into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the down-and-outers // the undesirables // – in fact, the very people Jesus had just mentioned – the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame*
- And they came – but there was still room for more – **And the host was insistent that his house be full for this banquet** – *so he ordered the servants to go out*

*beyond the city streets and alleys and go out into the country roads – and compel people from far away to come to the banquet so that his house would be full*

- Since these outsiders would not even know the host – they would need to be compelled or strongly encouraged to come to the banquet
- In Jesus’ parable, the host is God, and the original invitees represent the people of Israel, for whom the Messiah had come to offer salvation and entrance into God’s Kingdom
- *But many of the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah and thereby refused to enter God’s Kingdom*
- **But God is passionate to have the kingdom of heaven fully populated**
- *So the call next goes to the poor and needy and outcasts and undesirables to bring them into the Kingdom*
- And finally the call goes to the Gentiles like us – to sinners and pagans – to bring them into God’s Kingdom
- **Because God is passionate to have the kingdom of heaven fully populated**
- Who were the special objects of Jesus’ compassion and redemptive ministry?
- *The poor, the broken-hearted, prisoners of sin and spiritual bondage, the sick, the blind, the disabled, the demonized, those being oppressed by powers of darkness, those suffering most acutely the brokenness of this fallen world under the dominion of sin, death and Satan*
- **The Vulnerable people in our vision statement**
- To use Diane Langberg’s words – his was a regressive ministry – a ministry that goes back for those who are lost and weak and needy and lonely and unloved
- ***He who was rich went back for the poor // He who was whole went back for the broken // He who was Freedom itself went back for the captive // He who was the Light of the World went back for the blind // He who was Strength and Power went back for the weak and bruised // He who was Love went back for the lonely and unloved***
- ***Jesus Christ is the Incarnation of God – and we are the body of Christ***
- *During his earthly life, Jesus Christ was the visible representation of the invisible God – now Jesus is ascended to heaven and no longer visible in this world – but we are the visible body of Christ – just as Jesus was the embodiment of the Father’s heart and character, so we are called to be the embodiment of Jesus Christ in the world*
- **Our mission is to join Jesus in his ministry of retrieving the most vulnerable people of society and bringing them into the kingdom of God**

- Jesus was repeatedly going back to retrieve – *to gather up and heal and rescue* – the vulnerable: the lost, the weak, the sick, the needy and those on the margins of society
  - We are now called to continue retrieving the vulnerable in Jesus' name
- **Our calling as the body of Christ is to manifest the heart and character of Christ through our words and deeds just as Jesus manifested the heart and character of the Father through his words and deeds**
- **We are called to reflect the heart of Jesus for the vulnerable -- those on the margins of society** – *orphans // widows // prisoners // refugees // immigrants // the homeless // the poor // the hungry // the sick // the disabled // the oppressed // the persecuted // nursing home residents // children of prisoners // children of illegal immigrants*
- *We cannot live as Jesus lived and love as Jesus loved in our own strength*
- **We can only live as Jesus lived and love as Jesus loved as we are filled and empowered by the Spirit of Jesus within us**
- *That is why we must become a spiritually dynamic body in order to make a significant impact in 30 vulnerable families*
- **Spiritual victories precede ministry success**
- *Ministry success = carrying on Jesus' ministry of retrieving those who are most vulnerable*
- *“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.”*
- **Those words – inscribed on the Statue of Liberty – would fit well over the entrance gate into the kingdom of heaven**
- *The genius of America is that it has incorporated this Kingdom value into the very fabric of our national identity*
- Why would any nation want to welcome the poor, the oppressed, the homeless, the refugees, the wretched refuse of other nations into its borders?
- *Because nothing engenders loyalty and devotion and hard work and patriotism like the experience of grace and the hope of a new beginning and a new life in a land of freedom and opportunity*
- **Indeed – that's exactly how the Kingdom of God operates – people suffering under the oppressive tyranny of sin, death and Satan being given a new life and a new destiny by Jesus Christ**

- *Nothing produces loyalty and devotion to the King like a life-changing experience of His grace*
- How about you?
- *Do you know what it is to feel lost or weak or vulnerable or needy or lonely or unloved?*
- Have you ever known what it is to be poor or hungry or homeless or oppressed or captive to sin or evil?
- *Are you humble and poor in spirit enough to acknowledge that you desperately need God and His grace and mercy?*
- **There is a place in the kingdom of heaven for you**
- *Come just as you are*
- No need to clean yourself up first – Jesus will clean you up with the cleansing power of his blood shed for your sins on the Cross
- *No need to try to make yourself into a new and better person first*
- When you invite Jesus into your heart – he will change you from the inside out

(Conclusion)

- *For those of you who have already accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, your calling is to follow Jesus and to join Jesus in his ministry of retrieving lost and vulnerable and hurting people*
- **Your call is to follow Jesus into the homes that are broken**
- *Your call is to serve those whom Jesus served and extend His love to the vulnerable and needy people around us*
- **You will have the opportunity to obey that call and begin plugging into the vision during next Sunday's Serve Fest**
- Closing: Vision Theme Song: *Follow You*
- Altar Call: *Lord, I give all myself to You to participate fully in the Vision that You have given to Cornerstone*
- **“Follow You”**