

## TOOTING YOUR OWN HORN

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Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2024

All right; you guys ready?

So, do you feel -- when you look at your life -- Do you feel like you're here to do your will or God's will?

Ooh; they're quiet! [Congregants laugh]

Now, what I want you to see is, as a spiritual being, you 100% have the right to live from your will. Your soul can live from your will for as long as you want to. You can do it; you can play with it. You can make your own choices; you can make your own mistakes. You can have the most fun or the most misery you can imagine. You absolutely have a God-given right to live your whole life from your will.

And you have a point in that journey where you can say, *"Okay; well, I'll do this in God's will. Like, I'll dedicate this section or this process or this moment or this experience for God's will, nut the rest of it -- the other 97% -- I'm going to take out and do my way."* And you absolutely can do it that way! Right?

But there's a point, I believe, in our souls evolution where we get to the point where we just realize, *"Oh, it's just easier."* It's just easier! *"Yes. I know I could do it from my personality. I know I could do it from my ego. I know I could do it the way I want to do it ... but it just becomes easier when you say, 'Thy will be done.'"*

And what happens is: you realize that, the more that you're willing to say, *"Thy will be done,"* the more that you move to this higher level of good that your personality -- your ego, by itself -- can't get you to.

So, this week ... some of you know I do a weekly online meditation. I do a weekly email meditation that I blast -- that I send out -- to about a thousand people. And this week it was, *"Thy Will Be Done."* And if you want to receive the meditation, you can go to [revrichard.com](http://revrichard.com). Sign up for it and I'll send it out every morning, Tuesday morning, about 3 a .m. I'm not awake, but I send it out about that time. [Congregants laugh]

So the focus was on *"Thy Will Be Done."* And I want to talk about that issue, right? Because you have a right -- you have a God-given right -- to live your life from any point of view that you want. You get to do it your way. And that was the first gift that God gave all of us was free will. So, you have complete utter free will. And the thing is, there's a moment where we realize, *"Oh, I could do it my way. But I realize that sometimes, and most of the time, and all the time, it just works out better if I do it God's way."* Like, there's a higher level of good that's available to all of us.

And I really have begun to believe that life is a dance. And in this dance we're doing with God, sometimes we get to pick the music and we get to lead. And sometimes God picks the music and God wants to lead. And the spiritually aware know the moment where the music changes and you realize, *"Oh, God wants to lead in this moment and I better surrender."*

And it's such a nuance! You know, because the music can change so subtly. But it's in that nuance where we just get used to saying, *"Okay; Thy will be done. I thought we were going to go this way. I see that we're clearly going this way."* So what -- together:

[With congregants]: *"Thy will be done."*

Right? And sometimes we get to have the most fun by saying, *"No, I want to dance, and this is how I want to dance right now."* And God says, *"Let's do it!"* Right? And then you notice the change, and you

say, "Okay, I get it that this isn't going the way I thought it was going to go," and we just surrender to 'Thy will be done.'"

So, tonight I want to talk about tooting your horn. And I think there's a need, as spiritual beings, to toot our horn. You know, to really to announce who we are. And we can toot our horn from our own self-aggrandizement. Or we can toot our horn to announce the glory of God.

Matthew 5:16 said, "Let your light so shine before men ..." And I love that line! "Let your light so shine before men ..." And the idea here is: let your light so shine in front of the people around you. Can you think of a time in your life where you've actually turned your light down because of who was surrounding you? And it could be your family; it could be a place where you work; it could be your neighborhood. And it's in those moments where we turn our light down because we don't want to be too much for the people around us.

Most of us could probably think of a time in our life where somebody might have said to us, "Who do you think you are?" Or, "You're a little too big for your britches" or whatever that is? So, we've learned to kind of adjust our light.

But the Scripture is very clear. "Let your light so shine before men" -- and that implies women, as well -- "let your light so shine that others may see your good works and give glory to God." That there's a need -- there's a responsibility -- that each one of us has to allow the glory of God to be expressed through us: to let our light shine; to toot our own horn; to allow the glory of God to move through us in a way that's transformative.

So, if you look at yourself -- if you look at the way you're showing up in your life -- are you letting the fullness of your light shine? Or is it situational? That sometimes you turn your light on and sometimes you turn it down? Are there people in your life that you're sharing the brightness of who you are as a child of God? And others: they don't get to see it because you don't feel safe or you don't feel loved or you don't feel it's appropriate.

Tonight, I want you to look at how much God needs you to shine. That, as God's beloved, God needs you to shine and to let your light so shine that others may see your good works and give glory to God.

I'm going to teach tonight from Joshua: the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. And I love this chapter! I love this Book of Joshua. And the reason that I love this so much is that, it's the role of Joshua. He was Moses' number two. And Moses got the Israelites through the wilderness, but it was Joshua's job to get them into the Promised Land.

So Moses was in charge for the 40 years that they wandered, but it was Joshua's job to actually move them from the wilderness into the Promised Land that Moses wasn't able to do. And in the first Book -- or the first Chapter -- of Joshua, we read where God speaks directly to Joshua and prepares him for what's about to happen, right? He's preparing him for the work: for his leadership role in taking the people into the Promised Land.

And God makes some pretty dynamic promises to Joshua regarding the Israelites. And when we read it -- when I read this tonight -- I want you to hear that literally that is God's promise to you. That what was promised to Joshua -- what was promised to the elders, what was promised to them from the beginning of time -- was promised to each and every soul that follows in that spiritual lineage ... that follows in their footsteps.

So, beginning with Verse 1:

*After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' minister: "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore, rise and go over the Jordan, and you and all*

*these people into the land I am giving to them – to the people of Israel. Every place the soles of your feet will tread upon I have given to you. As I promised to Moses, from the wilderness; to this Lebanon; as far as the river – the great Euphrates; all the land of the Hittites to the great sea; toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.”*

So I want you to image that, when God speaks to Joshua, he is laying out a vision for a possibility for the Israelites. But it’s also a possibility for each and every one of us: that everything that you see – it is being given to you. All the good that you can imagine; every good gift; every blessing; every place that the soles of your feet will tread upon, God is offering to us!

And then he makes more promises! Verse 5:

*“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for you shall cause these people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.*

*“Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to the law, which Moses, my servant, commanded you. Turn not from the right hand or the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.”*

Now, what does he mean by that? *“Turn not to the right hand or the left, that you may have good success wherever you go?”* What I want you to see is: turning to the right hand or the left is when we settle for less than our heart's desires. When we settle for less than the good that God offers us, then we are turning to the right or the left, because we are not going straight to the glory of God. We're not going straight to all the promises that God has for us.

*“So do not turn to the right or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that's written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous and you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you?”*

And God says it to him like six times.

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage.”*

Right? How many of you have found that it takes courage to live a life? How many of you have found that fear is readily a part of our human experience, and that we have to be able to walk through our fears over and over and over again?

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage. And be not frightened; neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

I want you to hear that!

*“The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

And then he instructs Joshua to take the people into the Promised Land. Now, if you had been wandering for 40 years ... Like, if you've been wandering in limitation for 40 years, and all of a sudden you're being invited into the Promised Land, can you imagine that that would be a much bigger paradigm or a much bigger experience than you were led to believe that you actually deserved?

Forty years is two generations. One of the things we know happens generationally is sometimes the limitations of the father or the mother can impact the feelings of the child. And for two generations now -- for 40 years – they had been wandering and had begun to believe that they were wanderers. And God is trying to instruct them, *“No; no! You are stepping to the Promised Land. You are no longer meant to be a wanderer. You are now here to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.”*

Now, I want to go to Verse 5 and 6; Chapter 5 and 6, because in it is the story of Jericho. How many of you have never just heard the idea of the walls of Jericho -- the story of Jericho? Joshua 5 and 6. How many of you have heard that the whole point of the story is the walls of Jericho: they come a-falling down, right? Everybody heard that idea one way or the other?

Okay, so let me tell the story of this one. From Joshua, beginning with Chapter 5, Verse 13, through Joshua 6, Verse 27.

*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?"*

Right? [Laughs] So this presence ... right? When you learn it's an angel, this presence has got a drawn sword. And what Joshua does: he just walks up to him. And I want you to see that that is absolutely a spiritual point of view. Like, when you have a problem or you have a challenge, how many of us walk up to it? And how many of us try to -- as quickly as possible -- walk away from it? Right?

So Joshua walks up to it and asks, "Are you for us or against us?" And he says:

*"Neither," he replied. "But as the commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come." Then Joshua fell down on his face on the ground in reverence and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" And the commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." And he did so.*

Like, I want you to see the surrender that Joshua lived. Like, he'd just stepped into the Promised Land. He'd just walked his people into the Promised Land. They're coming upon the very first village: the village of Jericho. And it's a walled city. And the first thing that happens: he sees this angel with this big sword. And the angel says that, "I'm the commander of the Lord's army," and the first thing Joshua does is surrender to it; falls as an act of deep respect.

Now the gates of Jericho. I'm sorry, And, "Neither," he said.

*And now the gates of Jericho were secured, barred because of the Israelites.*

Right? So the Jericho ... They knew they were coming. They barred the gates of the door of the walled city, and no one went in or out. No one could come in or out.

*And then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men."*

Then he says:

*"March around the city once with all your armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of ram's horns in front of the Ark of the Covenant. And on the seventh day, march around the city seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. And when the men hear the sound of the long blast of the trumpets, have your whole army give out a loud shout. Then the walls of the city will collapse, and the army will go in and everyone straight delivered unto God."*

*So Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests to them and said, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant." And the Lord had the seven priests carry the trumpets in front of it. And he ordered the army to advance. And they marched around the city with the armed guards going ahead of the Ark of the Covenant. And when Joshua was speaking to the man, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets before them, and the armed guards marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rearguards followed the ark. And all the time the trumpets were sounding. But Joshua said to his commander, "Do not give a war cry. Do not raise your voice. Do not say a word until the day that I*

*command you. Then shout." So the Ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once. And then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.*

Now, why is this important?

I want you to look at this as a methodology for dealing with your challenges and your problems. Because you are going to have -- from time to time -- challenges and problems in your life. And the way that God gives Joshua to deal with this is: he wants him to surround the problem with God. And that the only job for the first six days is just march around the problem with a priest tooting the horn and the Ark of the Covenant following them, and then the army behind them.

Now, if you were in the walled city, and you see these group of people marching around your walled city -- blowing their horn, carrying this little box -- would you have any concern that you are not safe behind your walled city? No! You'd be looking down there; you'd be making fun of them. You'd be, *"Go ahead and march all the way around; get yourself really tired!"* Because all they're doing is marching around.

And then the next day, what do they do? They just march around one more time. And you would begin to feel so confident that these people were too stupid to do anything but march around the problem. They're just marching around the problem! You don't solve a problem by marching around it! But listen: that's what God instructed them to do.

See, we have a tendency to run from the problem. And what I want you to see tonight: if you have a problem or a challenge in your life, I want you to spend time every day imagining the activity of God going around that problem once a day for six days. Just go around it!

Now, what is the trumpet? What does it symbolize for us? The trumpet is the decree that God is greater than this. So, as you watch that problem -- and as your army, as the Ark of the Covenant, as the priests are going around your problem -- what I want you to be affirming over and over again as you're marching around the problem is that, *"God is greater than this."*

Because the Ark of the Covenant is a symbol for God. It's a symbol of the activity of God. And they carried the Ark of the Covenant in front of them. When they walked through the Red Sea, they carried the Ark of the Covenant first. So the Ark of the Covenant is a symbol for God.

So, over and over again, for six days your job is to announce to yourself inwardly that, *"God is greater than this."* Are you with me?

[With congregants:] *"God is greater than this."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"God is greater than this."*

Because you need to hear it! You need to build your inner faith that -- no matter how big your problem is; no matter how scary your problem looks; no matter what the situation may be -- every day you march around that problem with the Ark of the Covenant going first, and your inner trumpets, your inner priests blowing the horn that, *"God is greater than this."*

Together: [with congregants] *"God is greater than this."*

And you do that for six days. For six days, that's your only job: to take 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, and imagine going all the way around your problem. And just saying over and over again, *"God is greater than this."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"God is greater than this."*

And then:

*On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and they marched around the city seven times in the same manner. Except on the seventh day, they encircled the city seven times, then on the seventh time when the priest sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded his army to shout, "The Lord has given us your city. The Lord has given us your city."*

And what I want you to hear is your soul shouting, *"The Lord has given me the answer! The Lord has given me a healing. The Lord has given me deliverance. The Lord has given me a blessing."* And you shout that.

And then in the story, guess what happens? The walls come down.

And I want you to see that, from a human point of view, this looks stupid. [Congregants laugh] How many of you would think that that was a good idea? To march around your problem for six days announcing, *"God is greater than this; God is greater than this"*? And on the seventh day, you shout deliverance; you shout you're overcoming ... and that the walls would actually come down? No; we actually have more faith in our problem than we have in God!

But as we listen to this story; as we trust the story:

*When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a great shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged in and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord their God; they destroyed it with their sword: every living thing, man, woman, young and old, cattle, sheep, donkey.*

They owned it! That everyone ... See, I think this story is so profound. Because I believe it reveals a spiritual process that we need to practice in our own life. Because I believe, from time to time, we all have challenges. And when we have a challenge, I don't think we really have a plan for how to deal with it. Like, we're not sure what to do. We pray ... and we're not really sure how to pray, or if we're praying the right way.

And in this story, it actually gives us the methodology to deal with whatever is going on in your life. And it's a seven-day process.

Now, we know that seven days is a metaphor. It's really an understanding: like, the seven days of creation. It's a metaphor for the creative process. But this seven-day process is so powerful!

How many of you really have a problem or a challenge that you'd be willing to take this and try it out on? I really want you to practice this! So, in your time of prayer in the morning, I want you to imagine the problem. And it's okay to see it as a big, scary, tall walled city that looks like there's no way that you could actually have put a dent in the wall.

And for the first six days, every morning in your prayer time, you're going to walk around the problem. You're going to imagine the priests out in front of you with their trumpets. And their trumpets dedicate – declare – that, *"God is greater than this."*

Together: [with congregants] *"God is greater than this."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"God is greater than this."*

And that's all you have to do! For the first day, that's your only job: is to spend 10, 15, 20 minutes just seeing the activity of God going around that problem declaring that, *"God is greater than this."* Do that six days in a row. And on the seventh day, you do it seven times. And then, on the seventh time, you shout that your healing has occurred; that your abundance or your blessing or your good or your need or your challenge has been overcome. And you feel that, through that seven-day process, how your faith has become stronger and greater, because you actually know what to do.

See, God spoke directly to Joshua, because he wanted him to know the Promised Land. And everything that God promised Joshua, God has promised you: that every place that the soles of your feet touch, God is offering to you! That, whatever the challenge -- whatever the problem -- today we allow ourselves to toot the horn that is the dedication and the declaration that God is greater than any problem or challenge in our life. And we march around it. We do not run away; we do not hide. We do not believe that that walled city is greater than the power of God moving through us.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. And I want you to see that story in your mind's eye: that Joshua comes up to the angel of the Lord, the commander of God's army. And he gives Joshua a message about how he can overcome any problem -- any challenge -- in seven days. That whatever the problem -- whatever the challenge -- you learn to march around it; to declare that God is greater. You don't run from it; you don't hide from it. You actually march around it, declaring that God is greater. And on the seventh day, you do it seven times, and you shout. And, as you shout, you declare the goodness of God.

In the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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