

WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN

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I started coming here in 1994. It was my first Unity church. I left here in 2004 to go back to ministerial school, and a few things happened. And then I came back two years ago. And I feel so blessed.

This is ... yeah. This is my dream: to be here right here right now.

Do any of you know who Joshua is? Should I sing a song for you? [Congregants laugh] I don't think you want that| You'd probably have nightmares tonight. And Sally Jo told me that she'd take over the talk if I decided to sing. [Congregants laugh] So we won't do that! [Laughs]

Joshua was chosen to lead the children of Israel out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. That happens to be Old Testament. Now you may not be as familiar with the Old Testament, but years ago I used to read the Bible from cover to cover every year. So, I'm well acquainted with a lot of the stories in the Bible.

But Joshua was this young man who was a lot younger than Moses, thank God ... [laughs] Or he couldn't have taken over this unruly bunch if he hadn't been. But he decided that he would get over his fears. The reason that I say Joshua probably had some fears was because God kept saying, *"I go before you."* *"Be courageous."* *"Do not be dismayed."* *"I'm with you."*

And He said that -- you know I started counting all the times that I was finding that -- and I thought, *"Hmmm. He must have had kind of like Sandy preparing for this trip ... mean this, yeah -- this trip!"* [Congregants laugh] *For this time with you all!* That, you know he's kind of shaking in his boots.

He'd known these people all his life, and he also knew these people all his life. And I got a kick. I don't know how many of you read the Bible and laugh, but I was laughing. I got into the Old Testament more when I was preparing for this talk, and I couldn't believe how many times the people of Israel would promise Moses that they would do good. They would follow him. They would do just as God wanted.

And then a couple of verses down from there, here they are building a golden calf; eating food that wasn't theirs to eat; all these kinds of things that they were doing that they said they wouldn't do. No wonder Joshua was scared; he had to put up with this group. [Congregants laugh]

Joshua had been a spy. There were 12 spies that went into the Promised Land: this land that God was giving to them. And he and Caleb -- you may have heard of him ... Maybe he doesn't have as big a picture in the story, but the two of them were the only ones of the 12 spies that went in to look at the Promised Land who thought it was a good idea to go there.

The other 10 spies came back and they said, *"We don't want to go there. There's giants in the land; we're just going to be ... we'll be dead! Have you brought us out of all of everything just to take us back and us get slaughtered?"* That was the 10.

And then there was Joshua. And he says, *"This is the land of milk and honey. Look at the size of the grapes that we brought back."* All I could talk about was how good it was and, *"We ought to go in there!"*

And then Moses died -- or made his transition; sorry, Unity. And God buried him on top of a mountain. Can't remember the name of it right at the moment, but if you're really interested, I'll get my Bible out and we'll find it for you. But he died on the mountain looking out at the Promised Land, because Moses had not done things exactly the way that he was supposed to. So his punishment was to look at the Promised Land from up on the mountaintop and see this land that they were going to be headed for. But he wasn't allowed to go in.

But Joshua took over. And I'm sure there were a few people saying, "Yeah, who is he? You know, why should he get to be the leader? I mean we were we were commanders of the army too. How come him?"

You never hear that kind of thing, do you?

And God said -- actually at a different time In 1 Samuel, when they were, again, they were picking a king this time -- said, "*The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*" The Lord knew that Joshua was the one for leading the people out; that God could rely on him. Remember? The Divine knows everything. No matter what I'm thinking.

And guess where they were going first on this little trip? You heard Sally Jo singing about walls? They were heading for Jericho.

Now, I don't know how tall these ceilings are, but I got out my search thing on my computer, of course -- because they're all knowledgeable -- to find out how tall the walls were of Jericho. And they were 41 feet. Now, I don't know how tall this is. But in another place said it was four stories, so that may even be taller than this.

But you can imagine that, heading up to that city with those high walls, that they were probably feeling like ants. "*Here we are. We're the children of Israel come to take over your town.*" And so that was a possibility: that they were afraid. They were afraid because the city had these huge walls. And what were they going to do? They'd been in the wilderness, they hadn't been doing any work, except maybe with animals and maybe a little planting here and there. But they weren't people that were out there to take down walls.

And then Joshua tells them, "*Well, God told me exactly how we're going to take care of this business. You don't have to worry about these high walls, because*" -- I want you to get ready for this because it's a biggie! -- "*you're going to march around those walls for seven days. The first day you're only going to go once and you can't talk; you've got to be silent.*"

The priests ... The warriors were going first and then the priests. And they had these goat -- I don't know; you probably know what it is, Phil! Some kind of flugelhorn, maybe. [Laughs] I don't know; they were made out of rams' horns. So the priests had those.

And then they had the Ark of the Covenant. And I don't think they had wheels on that thing. I think they had to carry it. And inside the Ark of the Covenant were the Ten Commandments ... you know, these big things, big tablets. All this stuff in there! And there were four -- at least four people, maybe more -- carrying this thing.

And then there were warriors behind them. So, warriors in front; warriors behind; the priests; and then the Ark of the Covenant.

And they were going to walk around the walls one time a day for six days. Every day. And then come back. On the seventh day ... By the way, seven is the number of perfection. And when you look at things metaphysically in the Bible -- which is looking beyond -- what the word seven is.

So on the seventh day, Joshua says, "*Okay; get ready, we're going to march around Jericho seven times.*" And so they were blowing the flugelhorns, and they were marching once, twice. And at the end of it, they had a special message. So, on the seventh time, all of a sudden they blew the horns and then they shouted. And those walls came tumbling down.

Now you remember the song don't you? [Sings:] "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho." I don't ... Never mind; I won't go there. But anyway ...

So, the walls came tumbling down.

Now I looked at ... You know, I'm doing my best to give you a little bit of background. I looked and archaeologists kind of, you know, they're not too sure this happened. I mean, one group said it did ... but it couldn't have happened in the time frame that the Bible says. So, I didn't want to burst your bubble. So, I'm kind of on the fence about this. It could have happened and maybe it didn't.

But it makes a good story for us and it makes a good story to teach us. Because that, to me, is what it's all about. It's not about, *"I believe it; God said it; that settles it."* That was my background for 25 years. That I believed every word. And that I believed that, if I didn't believe it, then I was out of line.

So, I'm giving you the opportunity to think beyond what you're reading and to see how that might apply in your life.

One of my favorite psychologists, Maria Nemeth, talks about basic assumptions that we have. I want you to look at these walls as basic assumptions -- or thoughts -- that don't serve you. Basic assumptions are ... she believes they come in with us. I mean we come in with them. Sorry; that we come in with them.

I'll tell you what mine is: *"Something's wrong with me."* All of my life I have heard this little voice in my head saying something's wrong with me. And there's other ones like I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm not successful enough. I don't have enough money. I don't have the right education. And on and on and on.

But if you ever hear this little voice going on in your head, that's a wall. And I'm saying that those walls -- just like the walls of Jericho -- can come down. And there's a process of getting there. A process. Become aware of them.

You know, a lot of times we don't even realize what's running us. But I think about that *"something's wrong with me"* thing. And looking back, I can see where I was given that message by my parents ... not because they were awful people, because they weren't! But they would tell me, or my mother would say, *"You know, your dad went to college. And before he went to college, he was a national honor student. How come you aren't?"* Something's wrong with me, you know? I mean, little things like that.

I get to wait and find out what kind of messages I gave my kids as they were growing up, you know. But we do the best we can. But you may have -- and I believe that everybody does -- have something that has spoken to you throughout your life that wants to put you down. One of them is, *"I don't belong here. I don't belong anywhere."*

And I laugh. Have you heard of Brené Brown? Have you ever seen her? I mean that woman she wears clogs and jeans and a shirt when she's on when she's on a TED talk. I mean there's no dressing that woman up! [Congregants laugh] She's from Texas! And she ... Talk about not belonging! Because they ... You know. some people tried to get her to change her clothes. "No; this is me."

She, in a period of her life, had had a problem. You know, wanted to clean up her life So she went to AA. Well, they told her -- now, this is so unbelievable to me. They told her she didn't belong in AA. That she ought to go to Al-Anon, or she ought to go to CoDA or some other ... but she didn't belong in AA. So, she listened to them and she decided, *"You know what? I'm going to go. You told me I don't belong here; I'll go."*

She goes to CoDA; they told her she ought to go back to AA. [Congregants laugh] I don't know, I had my time of doing Twelve Steps; nobody told me I didn't belong! Thank you, God!

But, you know, we have these voices that talk to us. That talk to us and tell us we're not good enough; we don't belong. That something needs to be fixed. And I'm telling you, become aware. Just listen to the thoughts that are going on in your head.

Now you may be ... You may be perfect [clears throat]. And have no faults [Congregants laugh] and no voice. And good luck with that. [Congregants laugh]

But listen! Listen to what's going on in your head! Listen to the things that you say to people. Because out of the mouth of babes comes wisdom ... even when you're my age, you're still a babe, right? [Congregants laugh]

So listen. Listen to what's coming out of your mouth. Listen to the thoughts that you have. And then you can -- as you hear them and realize what they're saying -- you can say, "*No! No! That is not true of me. That is not true of me. I am perfect, whole and complete, just the way I am.*"

Can you say that with me?

[With congregants:] "*I am perfect, whole and complete, just the way I am.*"

Say that. Yeah; breathe into it. Because it's true! And the more you listen to that, the more you realize it. And that talk that goes on gets softer, and you don't hear it as much. Or you're more aware of it, so you take care of it easier.

I've had people ... You know, I'm a minister ... [Congregants laugh] And so, I talk to people about prayer. I talk to people about meditation. And sometimes the newer generations -- of which I am not -- kind of look at me like, "*You know, that's sitting on your meditation cushion going, ohm.*"

The truth is: if you don't spend time in prayer and meditation, you don't have that connection. You don't have that connection with Spirit. The more I spend time with Spirit, the more I hear the divine ideas. Like, for this talk. You know, I would get on one track and then, the next thing I knew, I was on another, because I spend time with the Divine. I can't.

You know, divine ideas come in the shower sometimes. [Congregants laugh] Wherever; driving a car! When you're not thinking about what you want to be thinking about, these ideas come. And it's really important to be spending time with that One Power, One Presence: God. Because then you get to realize: those walls are coming tumbling down. They don't keep me in, and they don't keep me out. They're not there anymore, because I'm doing the necessary work to keep me going one step at a time.

So, we're going to work on what needs to be done walking around those walls; marching around those walls, shouting in celebration. And the walls come tumbling down.

Thank you!