

Sermon notes – 5/3/09, 5/17/09
“The Beginning of Something New”
“Holy War as Mission”
Joshua 1:1-19
Rich Lusk

While I preached 2 sermons from Joshua 1:1-9, I still feel we have barely begun to mine this text for its riches. Here are some scattered notes on different aspects of the text that I did not address, as well as a few clarifications of the things I said in the sermons.

Here is an outline of Joshua, based on David Dorsey’s fine work:

- I. Israel’s initial success in entering Canaan (1-8)
 - A. Opening focus on the “Book of the Law of Moses” (1:1-18)
 - B. Encouragement from a believing Canaanite, Rahab (2:1-24)
 - C. Jordan “stands up” (3:1-4:24); Israel crosses the Jordan
 - D. Israel worships Yahweh in the promised land (5:1-15)
 - C’ Jericho “falls down” (6:1-27); Israel conquers Jericho
 - B’ Discouragement from an unbelieving Israelite, Achan (7:1-8:29)
 - A’ Closing focus on the “Book of the Law of Moses” (8:30-35)
- II. Israel’s Conquest of the Rest of Canaan (9-12)
 - A. All the kings of Canaan oppose Joshua (9:1-2)
 - B. Mercy for a believing remnant (9:3-27); Israel covenants with Gibeon
 - C. Defeat of the Southern coalition (10:1-15); led by the king of Jerusalem
 - D. Ceremony at Makkedah (10:16-43)
 - C’ Defeat of Northern coalition (11:1-15); led by the king of Hazor
 - B’ No mercy for hardened Canaanites (11:16-23)
 - A’ All the kings who opposed Joshua are listed (12:1-24)
- III. The Allotment of the Land of Canaan (13-24)
 - A. Introduction (13:1-7)
 - B. The transjordan tribes (13:8-33); their allotments outside of Canaan
 - C. The Levites (14:1-5); no territory, only towns
 - D. Personal allotment for Caleb (14:6-15)
 - E. Allotment for the non-Rachel tribe Judah (15:1-63)
 - F. Allotment for the Rachel tribe Joseph (16:1-17:18)
 - G. Allotment at Shiloh; tabernacle built and 7 tribes receive land (18:1-10)
 - F’ Allotment for the Rachel tribe Benjamin (18:11-28)
 - E’ Allotments for the non-Rachel tribes Simeon and others (19:1-48)
 - D’ Personal allotment for Joshua (19:49-50)

- C' The Levites (20:1-21:45); their towns and the "cities of refuge"
- B. The transjordan tribes (22:1-34); their return to their lands
- A' Conclusion (23:1-24:33)

The book shows us that Joshua is a new Moses. Here are several clues:

- Moses led the people through the Red Sea on dry ground; Joshua will lead them through the Jordan River on dry ground.
- Moses sent spies into the land; Joshua sends spies as well
- The people saw the miracles of Moses and trusted; in the same way, Joshua was exalted before the people, and they feared him because of what God did through him.
- Moses met with the Lord in the burning bush and took off his shoes because he was on holy ground. Joshua met the commander of the Lord's army and took off his shoes as well.
- Moses is called the "servant of the Lord;" Joshua is as well.

Joshua and Acts show a number of striking parallels:

- In each case, the leader of God's people has just left the scene (Moses in death, Jesus in his ascension)
- In the book of Joshua, Joshua is called to be Moses' successor and carry forward God's purposes in the conquest; in Acts, the Holy Spirit comes to be Jesus' successor, and carry forward the church's mission
- The Lord commands Joshua to be strong and courageous at the beginning of the book; at the beginning of Acts, the Lord promises power will come upon the disciples to make them strong and courageous (as seen in the sudden transformation of Peter from coward to preacher)
- In Joshua, Israel is commanded to conquer the land; in Acts the church is commanded to bear witness to the ends of the earth
- In Joshua, the people are led through a clear sequence of events: they cross over the Jordan in a kind of baptism (cf. 1 Cor. 10:2), they get circumcised, and they celebrate Passover. In Acts, the sequenced is similar: the Spirit baptizes the church, 3000 are baptized with water (the new covenant equivalent of circumcision per Colossians 2:11-12), and they break the bread of the Lord's Supper together (cf. Acts 2:42-46; the Lord's Supper is the new covenant fulfillment of the Passover according to 1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
- In both books, the first move of God's people is to invade a key city; Jericho falls by shouting and trumpeting, while Jerusalem is invaded by means of prayer and preaching

- Almost immediately in both books, we find the people of God hindered by sin in the camp: In Joshua, Achan steals booty that belongs to the Lord, and is put to death on the spot (Josh. 7). Likewise, in Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira steal from the Lord by lying about some property they had sold, and they are executed on the spot. Note the word for stealing in Acts 5:2 is a rare term, but is also used in the Greek (Septuagint) translation of Joshua 7:1. Further, in Acts 20:33, Paul explicitly repudiated having committed the sin of Achan (Josh. 7:21), showing he understood his mission work as a successful “holy war” campaign.
 - In both books, fear enters the enemies of God’s people, allowing the covenant community to score significant victories (Josh. 2:9-13; 5:1-2; Acts 2:2:43, 5:5, 11; 9:31; 19:17)
 - In both books, we see Gentiles brought in, though with significant controversy (Josh. 9; Acts 15) and attack (Joshua 10; Acts 6-7)
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Here’s something I wrote a while back on the ethics of Joshua’s holy war:

In the book of Joshua, the Israelites wage a “holy war” against the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. We know that God does not want us to fight this kind of violent, bloody battle today. Paul said our warfare is not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:10–20) and our weapons are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4–6). We will inherit the nations, but not through bloodshed (Rev. 2:26–27). What, then, do we do with the holy war theme found in the Old Testament? Specifically, how do we reconcile the conquest with God’s love and the church’s mission? If we look at the Bible’s story arc from beginning to end, we can arrive at satisfactory answers.

But first we need to dismiss a few wrong answers. Some have suggested that the Israelites were simply mistaken to engage in total war with the Canaanites. Their leaders may have claimed religious justification for mass slaughter (as political leaders do today), but they were either deceived about God’s will themselves, or they were deceiving others. If this were the case, we would expect to see later revelation condemn the conquest of the land, but Scripture never does so (cf. Amos 2:9–10; Hosea 2:14–15). Instead, we find the conquest celebrated as an act of God (Acts 7:45; 13:19), and its leaders praised as faithful heroes (e.g., Heb. 11:30–34). We see Israel criticized for not having the courage and faith to take on the task of conquering the land sooner (e.g., Num. 13–14; Ps. 106:24–36), and

when she does finally enter the land, we find God fighting for her (Josh. 2) to give her the land as a promise-fulfilling gift (Josh. 23:3–5, 9–10; cf. Ps. 104:17–22). Another proposed solution is to simply divide the Old Testament from the New Testament. God has changed his mind, perhaps even his character. That was then, this is now. God dealt one way with primitive Israelites; now he works differently in a more enlightened age. But this attempted solution is a false path. Those who are embarrassed by God's wrath in the Old Testament will not find relief by turning to the New Testament. Jesus harps on the subject of hell and divine retribution more than anyone in the Old Testament (e.g., Matt. 25:41) and the apostles claim that God's punishment is, if anything, intensified in the new covenant era (cf. Heb. 2:1–4).

What then is the biblical view of Joshua's conquest? How should we understand the violence and bloodshed involved in Israel's (and God's) warfare against the Canaanites? If we put the conquest in the wider context of the biblical story as a whole, what do we find?

First, the notion that the conquest is genocidal is simply false. Morality, not race, was the key issue in the conquest. Ethics, not ethnicity, is the key category. The Canaanites were not punished with extermination because they were Canaanites; rather, they were destroyed because they were wicked idolaters and God chose to no longer tolerate them.

God warned Israel against an attitude of racial pride from the beginning. God had already made it clear to the Israelites that they were not chosen to be his special people because they were a morally superior or numerically stronger nation in any way (Deut. 7–9). Israel was specifically forbidden to assume that her possession of the land was a sign of her righteousness (Deut. 9:4–6). However, there is no doubt the conquest was a judgment against Canaan's unrighteousness (Lev 18:24–25; 20:22–24; Deut. 7:5, 9:5, 12:29–31; 1 Kings 14:24, 21:26; 2 Kings 16:3, 17:7, 21:2). This act of holy war was about divine judgment against false worship, not genocide against a particular ethnicity.

Two factors prove beyond all doubt that the conquest was not a racially motivated, genocidal attack. Note that the first Canaanite we meet, Rahab, is actually saved! This is striking: Israel has been commanded to wipe out the Canaanites because of their wickedness, and yet we are immediately introduced to a repentant Canaanite woman who fears God and shows

loyalty to Israel (Josh. 2:9–11; cf. Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). As a result of her faith, her household is spared when the city of Jericho falls. The scarlet thread on her window (Josh. 2:18) served the same purpose as blood on the doorposts of Israelite dwellings in the exodus (Ex. 12:22–23). Later, the Gibeonites are also spared (Josh. 9), again showing God is willing to save those under the ban if they repent and seek his favor. The Gibeonites were incorporated into Israel as helpers to the Levitical priests (Josh. 9:27). These instances of Gentile salvation in the midst of judgment foreshadow what is to come. Conversion, rather than conquest, will be the *ultimate* trajectory for the nations. Grace for the nations will ultimately override judgment.

Also note that God threatens to treat Israel precisely the same way he treated the Canaanites (Deut. 9; cf. Deut. 2:1–12, 18–23). God is not partial in matters of justice. Israel's status before God is not an unconditional (e.g., race-based) privilege. God has already threatened to destroy Israel because of her sin (Num. 14:11–25), just as he will destroy the Canaanites for their sin. The terms of the covenant threaten Israel with a Canaanite-like expulsion from the land if the nation rebels (Lev. 18:28; Deut. 28). Even in the books of Joshua and Judges, we find an Israelite individual (Achan) and a whole tribe (Benjamin) can become the objects of holy war. Much later in Israel's history, Israel will have done unto her what she did to the Canaanites, when God raises up the wicked empires of Assyria and Babylon to exile Israel. Israel can only maintain residence in the holy land so long as she lives as God's holy people. In short, if Israelites live like Canaanites, God treats them like Canaanites, and if Canaanites live like Israelites, they get treated like Israelites. The covenant is never absolutely tied to blood, but rather to faith.

Second, we need to note that the real prosecutor of holy war is not Israel, but the Lord. Indeed, this is one major distinction between "holy war" and what we could call "normal war." In holy war, such as the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, God himself functions as chief commander (Ex. 15:3; Josh. 5:13–15) and combatant (Josh. 23:3; Ps. 44:2–3; 47:1–4) in a unique way. Holy war is total, in that everything comes under the ban (*herem* in the Hebrew) and is devoted to God, including men, women, children, and plunder (Josh. 10:40–42, 11:16–20). Holy war is ultimately liturgical and sacrificial: the targets of this specialized form of warfare become an offering to the Lord, consumed with fire from his altar (Josh. 6:24; cf. Deut. 13:16). In normal warfare, by contrast, civilian

casualties and property damage were to be kept to a minimum (Deut. 20; see also Num. 31:7–18; Deut. 21:10–14), and plunder could be kept. Normal war also required Israel to pursue peaceful avenues of reconciliation before fighting (Deut. 20:8).

The Lord authorizes and wages “holy war” as a way of administering his perfect grace and justice. The conquest is gracious because it is the way in which God gives the land he swore to Abraham to the nation of Israel. The conquest is an act of divine justice because the inhabitants of the land had filled their cup of iniquity to the brim. Several generations earlier that had not been the case, and so the gift of the land to Abraham’s descendants was delayed (Gen. 15:16). But when the Canaanites’ wickedness had reached its full measure, God’s longsuffering patience expired and the Canaanites received their just deserts. In this way, the conquest serves as sign and pointer to the final judgment.

It is important for us to grasp the crucial element of justice in holy war. God did not use Israel to invade a peace-loving, righteous people. This was not an act of oppressing the innocent. The inhabitants of the land were grossly depraved and wicked, on par with those who perished in the flood in Noah’s generation. Canaanite society was filled with violence, cruelty, idolatry and immorality. Their destruction was well deserved.

This brings us to a third point. The conquest is not inconsistent with God’s love; indeed, God’s love *demand*s that he bring judgment on the wicked. God’s anger at human cruelty and his wrath against human sin are driven by his love. Can we really say God is loving if he is indifferent to the wickedness of a Hitler or Stalin? Is he loving if he lets his people suffer slander and persecution without ever doing anything to vindicate them and punish their oppressors? Is he loving if he allows the wicked to have dominion indefinitely, without ever acting against them? Consider an analogy: If I simply stand by and watch as my wife is assaulted, I do not love her. If I truly love her I will step in to defend her, even if it means using force against the one who is attacking her. The conquest shows us that God’s anger is aroused by evil because evil disfigures his good creation and stands in the way of his gracious design for humanity. As a loving God, he simply has to act to defeat it. The Canaanites had come to embody evil to the fullest degree, and had to be destroyed.

Of course, the conquest does not reveal the whole of God's purpose for the Gentile nations. Nor should it have shaped Israel's attitude to the nations for the long run. God's law gave Israel very specific instructions for relating to aliens and strangers in the land after the conquest was over (Ex. 22:21; 23:12; Lev. 19:33–34; Deut. 10:17–19; 14:28–29; 24:17–18; 26:12–13). Once the Israelites occupied the land, they were to show hospitality and kindness, remembering that God had showered his mercy on them. The sharp distinction between the way Israelites were to treat the Canaanites during Joshua's generation and the way they were to treat Gentiles after they settled in the land is definitive proof that the conquest did not exhaust God's design for the nations outside Israel. While the conquest was a vitally important episode in Israel's history, we should keep in mind it was also a unique event, limited in scope to a singular time and place. Even within the span of the Old Testament, the conquest hardly provided the overriding model for Israel's relationship to the other nations (cf. Ex. 23:9; Jer. 29:7).

Indeed, God's ultimate plan is salvation for all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1–3), including bringing an end to violence, as swords are beaten into plowshares and tanks into tractors (Isa. 2:1–4). Temporary judgments on particular nations do not negate God's overarching purpose of extending blessing to all nations in the long run. Somehow, the conquest is a key stage in God's unfolding plan of global, cosmic redemption. Thus, the conquest of Canaan can never be disconnected from the cross of Christ. In the former, God brings judgment against the sin of the nations; in the latter, God bears judgment against the sin of the nations. Both are crucial parts of the biblical narrative.

Of course, none of our explanations of God's deeds can ever be comprehensive and the conquest is no different. Much mystery remains. But it should be clear that any attempts to use the conquest to justify total, *herem* warfare today are misguided. We will never again have a special command from God, ordering us to physically execute entire peoples and nations. Instead, we have been given a mission to disciple the nations.

In Matthew 15, Jesus interacts with a woman Matthew identifies as a Canaanite. To call her by this ethnic name must be making a theological point because the

Canaanites as such had ceased to exist centuries before and no one used that label any longer. As I pointed out in the sermon, this is one way Matthew is showing us that Jesus transformed holy war

In Matthew, *herem* warfare is directed against Satan and his demons (Matt. 10, where the mission of the disciples is presented in militant terms as a new conquest). Leithart explains:

Jesus treats the mission of the Twelve as a quasi-military operation. The apostles are “sheep in the midst of wolves” (10:16), and should expect to face persecution and rejection (10:17, 23). Their ministry will create turmoil among their hearers, turning brother against brother and children against parents (10:21, 35-36). To fulfill their mission, the Twelve need to act with courage, trusting their Father and fearing God rather than man (10:28-29). Jesus announces that he has come to bring a “sword” rather than peace (10:34), and demands a total commitment from His disciples, including a willingness to die for His sake (10:37-39). In exhorting His apostles “Do not fear,” Jesus is repeating the words of Moses and Joshua to Israel before the conquest (Num 14:9; 21:34; Deut 1:21; 3:2, 22; 31:8; Josh 8:1; 10:8, 25). The discourse anticipates that some will receive the Twelve, and promises that those who do will, like Rahab, receive a reward (10:40-42). Of course, this conquest is quite different from the original conquest. It is a conquest of liberation and life-giving – the sick healed, dead raised, lepers cleansed, demons conquered (10:8). If this is *herem* warfare, it is directed not against Canaanites, but against Satan and His demons. Like Moses, Jesus instructs and sends the Twelve into the land but does not accompany them (Matt 11:1).

In Matthew 15, Jesus blesses the Canaanite woman who comes to him. But there is an interesting aspect I should have developed more in the sermon. This story is followed by further healing (Jesus continues his holy war against disease and sickness) and then the feeding of the 4000. 4 is the number of the world. They collected 7 large baskets of leftover (e.g., crumbs that fell from the table – cf. Matt. 15:27). When the Israelites entered Canaan, there were seven Gentile nations they were to drive out: “When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are about to enter and occupy, he will clear away many nations ahead of you: the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. These *seven* nations are all more powerful than you” (Deut. 7:1-2).

Another holy war connection: In Joshua 1, the Lord tells Joshua every place the sole of his foot treads will be given to him. In Joshua 2, he sends two spies in to “foot” the land. In other words, spying the land = footing the land. In Matthew

10, Jesus sends out the disciples by twos, just like the spies. They will “foot” the lands/cities that will ultimately be conquered by the gospel. Jesus, as the greater Joshua, claims his inheritance through those he sends out as his representatives.

Another good passage on fighting sin in our own hearts in 1 Peter 2:11-12. Our warfare within should result in being witness to those on the outside. The ways we use sex, money, power, family, leisure, etc. should show the world around us what life lived under the reign of God looks like.

Liturgy is also an important aspect of our holy war. Before Joshua could conquer the land, Abraham carried out a proto-conquest by setting up altars and proclaiming the gospel to the people of Canaan.

The land of Canaan is under the ban. All the inhabitants of the land are to be destroyed. But the first Canaanite we meet, Rahab, is spared. Rahab is called a prostitute, which means she was the ancient equivalent of a modern sex slave. She demonstrated her loyalty by telling a righteous lie to the men of Jericho, and was rescued when the city fell.

She is typological of the church. We are spared when the Greater Joshua wages his holy war on evil if we clutch to the scarlet thread of his blood. The thread, by the way, plays the same role as the blood on the doorposts at Passover. Death passes over her house because of the bloody sign.

I mentioned Tim Keller in the second sermon when I talked about mercy work. Keller is perhaps the best pastor/theologian in the church today at dealing with this theme in the Bible. “We tend to be spiritually middle class rather than poor in spirit” is another Kellerism. I strongly recommend reading, listening, and studying Keller’s work in this area.

Peter J. Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, p. 193-194, on our holy war weapons:

“Can it really be so simple?” That is the feeling we have about the church. She has been given a mission of global conquest. As Rudolf

Schnackenburg has explained, "Through the Church, Christ wins increasingly his dominion over all things and draws them ever more powerfully and completely beneath himself as head... the Church's mission is necessary and willed by Christ to bring the world of men and with this the whole of creation under his rule." One cannot conceive of a more astounding project. And yet, as we examine the tools the church has been given to accomplish this mission, we are prompted to ask, "Is that all there is to it?" **Surely there has to be more to the church's arsenal of weapons for world conquest than worship, baptism and the Lord's supper, church discipline, preaching the gospel, teaching, prayer and service.** Surely God expects the church to be doing more in the real world than that! We are inclined to think that God has provided us with a sharp rock for a construction project that requires power tools. We seem to have been given muzzle-loaders in a war that demands nuclear capability. The church is a mystery.

Though she is an "institution," she is more than an institution. She is the assembly of the Father, body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit. Because the church is a mystery, she is grasped only by faith.

Likewise, the church undertakes her mission, and fulfills her mission, only by faith. In ways that we cannot fully understand, the mere presence of the church affects the world for good or ill. In mysterious ways, the public worship and feast of the assembly of God bring nearer the consummation of the kingdom of God. In ways that go beyond human comprehension, the preaching of the gospel has creative power. If we cannot understand precisely how this takes place, it is not because it does not take place. It is because the church, even in her mission of world conquest, is required to walk by faith, not by sight.

In the second sermon, I made reference to a story from a news that reported the Pentagon would no longer be using Bible verses on the cover sheets of its White House briefings. Here is one account

(<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/elections/2009/05/19/pentagon-briefings-longer-quote-bible/>):

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon said Monday it no longer includes a Bible quote on the cover page of daily intelligence briefings it sends to the White House as was practice during the Bush administration.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said he did not know how long the Worldwide Intelligence Update cover sheets quoted from the Bible. Air Force Maj. Gen. Glen Shaffer, who was responsible for including them, retired in August 2003, according to his biography.

For a period in 2003, at least, the daily reports prepared for President George W. Bush carried quotes from the books of Psalms and Ephesians and the epistles of Peter. At the time, the reports focused largely on the war in Iraq.

The Bible quotes apparently aimed to support Bush at a time when soldiers' deaths in Iraq were on the rise, according to the June issue of GQ magazine. But they offended at least one Muslim analyst at the Pentagon and worried other employees that the passages were inappropriate.

On Thursday, April 10, 2003, for example, the report quoted the book of Psalms - "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him. ... To deliver their soul from death." - and featured pictures of the statue of Saddam Hussein being pulled down and celebrating crowds in Baghdad. "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand," read the cover quote two weeks earlier, on March 31, above a picture of a U.S. tank driving through the desert, according to the magazine, which obtained copies of the documents.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, on Monday said U.S. soldiers "are not Christian crusaders, and they ought not be depicted as such."

"Depicting the Iraq conflict as some sort of holy war is completely outrageous," Lynn said in a statement. "It's contrary to the constitutional separation of religion and government, and it's tremendously damaging to America's reputation in the world."

The problem is that the Bible's holy war passages cannot be used for wars of this type. It simply a case of misusing Scripture, of taking verses out of context.

Compare this to cases where Philippians 4:13 is taken out of context, to encourage athlete's they can win the game or set a record. It's wonderful to encourage people with Scripture, but in that context, Paul was talking about being content when he had food to eat and when he lacked even basic necessities. We want to beware or trivializing Scripture.

In the same way, it's great to use Scripture to encourage soldiers and civil leaders. But we need to be careful about how we do that.

All that being said, my comment that these verses do not apply to our warfare against our enemies any more than it applies to their warfare against us should not be misunderstood. I am not saying there is moral equivalence. Obviously, I would want to see traditional “just war” criteria applied to any armed conflict. But just comparing cultures, I have no doubt that we have more righteous people in God’s eyes than the terrorist cells we are opposing.

Charles Chaput has some good thoughts on the way we are to live in the world as God’s holy people:

We’re here to rock the boat. That’s what it means to be leaven. The Epistle of James says that faith without works is a dead faith. John Paul II says the same thing with a slightly different twist: Faith which does not become culture is dead faith. By “culture” he means the entire environment of our lives. Our culture reflects who we are and what we value. If we really believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it should be obvious in our families, our work, our laws, our music, art, architecture — everything....

Faith should impregnate everything we do. It should bear fruit every day in beauty and new life. And that’s why God doesn’t need “nice” Christians, Christians who are personally opposed to sin, but too polite to do anything about it publicly. Mother Teresa was a good and holy woman . . . but she wasn’t necessarily “nice.” Real discipleship should be loving and generous, just and merciful, honest and wise – but also tough and zealous . . . and determined to turn the world toward Christ.

If God wants us to be His cooperators in transforming the world, it’s because the world needs conversion. The world is good because God created it. But the world is also sinful, because we’ve freely made it that way by our sinful choices and actions.... We need to be actively involved in the world, for the sake of the world. We need to love the world as it needs to be loved – affirming its accomplishments, and redeeming its mistakes.

Again, Chaput:

Our job is to bring Jesus Christ to the world, and the world to Jesus Christ. But how can a few simple people like us convert the world? Mary and the Apostles asked the same question. They changed the world by letting Jesus Christ live and work through them. We don't need to be afraid. We need to be confident in the promise made by Christ Himself: "I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Don't be afraid of the world. The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley once sneered that "I could believe in Christ if He did not drag along behind Him that leprous bride of His, the Church." But Shelley's long gone, isn't he . . . and the Church is still here, still bringing life to the world.

Don't be afraid of the world. Charles Spurgeon once said, "The way you defend the Bible is the same way you defend a lion. You just let it loose." So much of the world is already dead without knowing it — and that's exactly why people respond to the truth when they hear it. Robert Farrar Capon wrote that, "Jesus came to raise the dead. The only qualification for the gift of the Gospel is to be dead."

You don't have to be smart. You don't have to be good. You don't have to be wise. You don't have to be wonderful. You just have to be dead. That's it."

Understand the purpose of your life. When you leave here today, you're going out into a struggle for the soul of the world. That's how the Holy Father describes it. That's your vocation. Nothing is more important than that work. C.S. Lewis once said that "Christianity, if false, is of no importance; and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

God tells Joshua he will conquer if he walks in the way of Torah, not turning to the right hand or to the left. For an interesting discussion of Torah (all the moreso because it comes from a Lutheran), see Adolph Harstad's commentary on Joshua in the Concordia series, 75ff. Just as Joshua was to use Torah to win the victory over the Canaanites, so Jesus used the Torah to defeat Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4).

On the new creation theme, see Harstad, 64. Harstad rightly sees the land as a type of the renewed earth.

Harstad also points out that God forsook Jesus on the cross so that he will never have to forsake us as his people, 67.

Harstad points out the meditation God calls Joshua to is not a matter of emptying his mind (as in Eastern religions), but filling his mind and heart with God's word.
