

## Jericho Moments

On a trip to Israel a number of years ago, the group went to Jericho. This city is in the West Bank of Israel, area controlled by the Arab population of Israel.

There are roughly about 18000 people living in Jericho today, about the same as South Boston, the town there we now live.

Large baskets of oranges and bananas were stacked up for sale, and we were warned that people would come up to us and try to sell us trinkets for a dollar or two.

When we first arrived, we stopped at the actual tree that Zachaeus climbed to see Jesus. Well, maybe it wasn't the actual tree, but there was a sign there that mentioned the story, and a fence around large sycamore trees that would have easily afforded a view of Jesus.

Zachaeus was an influential man in town, and was very small in height. With this simple act he not only saw Jesus, but became I am sure one of his followers as well. In fact, Jesus told him to come down out of the tree and he would have supper with him at his house!

What a blessing for him, and for us, when we really strive with all of our might to see Jesus. When we see him, when he speaks to us, our lives will never be the same.

I wonder how many of us would take the time or make the effort to climb a tree to see Jesus. How important is it that we enter the presence of our Lord today, and how do our lives show that priority or lack of it?

Jericho is also the place where Jesus healed the blind beggar Bartimaeus. He was sitting by the road, could not even climb a tree. Hearing Jesus pass by, he called to him, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Sometimes, in fact many times, we have not, because we ask not. Jesus does not bless or heal because we have not asked him to.

Nowhere does the bible speak about the wonderful things that happened to the huge crowd that followed Jesus. Their only mention is to tell Bartimaeus to be quiet.

Do you know what he did? He shouted even louder. Jesus stopped, asked him what he wanted, and healed his blindness on the spot.

Standing there, near the same location thousands of years later, I asked Jesus to stop and visit with me. He did, and has performed countless miracles during those encounters. Bart and I would have gotten along famously, for we keep on seeking Jesus, and no matter what anyone else does or says, we have a connection that will last forever.

The other big thing that happened there is the Jericho battle from Old Testament times. Joshua had just taken over the leadership of the people of Israel who had been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. They were about to take possession of the Promised Land, and were ready to do battle with the inhabitants of a large city with big wide walls.

But instead of long siege, a direct assault by well-trained soldiers, God told them to do something different. March around the outside walls of the city once every day. Then on the

seventh day, march around seven times, break the pitchers covering their lanterns, and blow their trumpets.

The obeyed, the walls fell, and the Israelites took over. I sometimes wish it was that simple today for the Lord to do great things like this with us.

But wait, it is! All we have to is obey God, walk with him, and he will take over not just the city, but the world.

Many do not walk with him. Many don't show up for the once a day walk. And nobody shows up for the seven times around on that seventh day.

I believe that one reason the world is so wicked and faithless today is that we not done the three things that are described in the scripture above.

We have not given the effort like Zacchaeus to see Jesus when he comes by. We have not asked Jesus to heal us like Bartimaeus the blind man. And we have not participated lately in the battle for our city and trusting God to make the walls which interfere with his plan fall down.

So, I urge you to take some bigger journeys in the coming days, weeks, and months. Think bigger, shout louder, and walk more around the opportunities God presents.

Jericho moments are gifts from God. And they will not happen unless we do more than hear the stories that once happened there. We must go to Jericho, find our Lord, and let the walls of disobedience and lack of commitment fall down.

God has never stopped making Jericho moments happen. He just wants us to go along for the ride!