

# Jericho Moments

When we stepped off the bus in Jericho, we were surrounded by merchants who wanted to sell us postcards and pictures, as well as other items which they were sure we needed. We did buy a few, and then looked toward the sycamore tree which was designated as the one Zacchaeus, the tiny man who wanted to see Jesus, had climbed.

The oranges had a very thick peel, almost half an inch, and the fruits the people grew there were delicious. We could almost see Jesus enjoying the fruit with us as we toured the historic city of faith.

Jericho, the "City of Palms" is a small town in the southern part of Israel, about seven miles north of the Dead Sea. Being one of the oldest continuous towns in the world, dating to about 9000 B.C., it has a rich history. There was always plenty of water, with many springs in the area.

Jericho is first mentioned in the bible as the place where Joshua sent the spies to see if Israel would be able to have victory as they came into the land of Canaan. Then, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho. And won. Just by obeying God and walking around the famous walls. Which fell, by the way.

The Sunday School teacher addressed the class: "Children, who knocked down the wall of Jericho?" No one answered, so she called on Billy. "Billy, tell me who knocked down the wall of Jericho?"

Billy replied, "Don't ask me. I didn't do it and I don't know who did; and besides, if I did know I don't rat on people."

The teacher became very angry and marched Billy right out the classroom door to the Sunday School superintendent. "Mrs. Archer, Billy refuses to tell me who broke down the wall of Jericho. I think he should be disciplined."

The Sunday School superintendent replied, "Don't worry. I am sure the thing was about ready to fall apart anyway. Besides, we can take money out of the endowment fund to replace the thing."

Sadly, that is much of what today's generation knows about Jericho. We must rediscover its meaning. And see how Jesus changed it all. And see how that can change us.

When Jesus walked into Jericho, he saw a blind man was sitting by the side of the road. Jesus healed him of his blindness, and then the man followed Jesus, praising God.

Another time Jesus was passing through the city, he met Zacchaeus, a very rich man, a tax collector. He wanted to see Jesus, but could not see him because he was very short, so he climbed a sycamore tree. Jesus had dinner with him. He became a Christian, and gave back all the money he had stolen.

Jericho was not far, about 15 miles from Jerusalem, so Jesus went there many times. It is the Jericho road where Jesus placed the story of the Good Samaritan, who told us how we can love our neighbors more than ourselves.

So here are a few thoughts to ponder.

One, the city of Jericho was pagan for centuries. They trusted in the great wall to protect them. When God's people trusted him, not the sight of the imposing wall, they had victory. Are there walls you trust in rather than God? Of course. The battles for Jericho must be fought today. And with God, there will always be victory.

Two, Jesus is ready to heal us of our blindness today. We think the world has more to offer than God. We trust in what organizations, money, and control to give us fulfillment rather than God. We consider church an option. We do faith on our own terms, occasionally, rather than God's. Jesus is ready to heal us of that blindness, and bring life to us and our families, if we come to him and ask for healing. It may change our financial situation, the way we spend our time, and what we think about. But it will certainly change our heart.

Three, Jesus knows we walk the road between Jericho and Jerusalem every day. He urges us to reach out to those in need and help them. In fact, this is one of the main reasons the church exists. He says we should love our neighbor, especially if he or she might be different from us. Salvation must be found. We must walk with Jesus and have ears which finally hear, eyes which see at last.

This hits at one of the keys to the conflict in our nation today. We must love our neighbor. We must seek to understand those who think and see differently than us. We must not pass them by, but become friends and neighbors not on our own terms, but on God's.

So we don't have to wait for a trip to the Holy Land to go to Jericho. We are already there. There are walls to be destroyed. There are bridges to be built. And God is ready for Jericho moments today. Are you, dear reader?