

I've stood in Downing Street in London several times. My dad and I are very much into current affairs and politics and so if we were in London in the 1970s we'd try and stand on the opposite side of the road to No.10 and see if anyone famous was coming in or going out. I think I saw both Mr Wilson and Mr Callaghan there. Since 1989 when the big steel gates went up because of the IRA, I've only stood there once. That was in June 2014 when I went to a rehearsal of the Trooping the Colour. The armed police officers checked my ticket and let me go through the security gates. Then I went through a small pedestrian tunnel called the Treasury Tunnel that took me straight to Horse Guards Parade and the large stand I needed to sit in. It felt great standing albeit briefly in a very famous street that I often see on television.

I've stood outside those gates a few times since, but I've never been let in. I haven't got the right security pass or credentials. It's a very secure place. They're not going to let just any John, Robert or Paul in without good reason. Most people aren't allowed to go through those tall gates. You often see crowds of people milling around outside the gates, but that's where they stay – on the outside looking in. It's very secure.

In May and June we're looking at the book of Joshua on a Sunday evening. Already we've seen how God told them to be strong and very courageous and how they crossed the River Jordan even though it was in flood. After that they dedicated themselves to God and worshipped Him. All is going well.

However, the next step they need to take in their quest to live in their Promised Land is to sort out the city of Jericho. There are a lot of people in there who would wish to cause the Israelites harm. The inhabitants there don't want several million people coming in and stealing their land. It's not easy to sort it out because they're all in the city and it is protected by large walls. What should they do?

The easy option would be to surround the city, so that none of the people can go in or out. Laying siege to Jericho would take quite a long time, but few if any Israelites would get hurt and it's almost certain that Jericho would give up in the end, as the people there need to eat and drink.

God moves in a mysterious way, is one of my favourite hymns, and God certainly did that with regard to Jericho. You probably know the story already.

God told Joshua to trust Him. God told Joshua in verse 2, “See I have delivered Jericho into your hands...” God didn’t want Joshua to do a normal military manoeuvre like attacking the walls or laying a siege. For six days they were to march around the city once a day with the Ark of the Covenant near the front and several dozen priests sounding their trumpets. What a spectacle that would have been, but also quite bizarre. They were trusting God for something to happen, but probably all that was going to happen was for the inhabitants of Jericho to laugh at them. “What are you doing? You’ll never get in here – we’ve used the latest technology to construct our walls – you’re wasting your time hanging around here!” For six days this happened. The Ark of the Covenant was paraded around the walls, the priests blew their trumpets and that was that.

Our reading ended at verse 12, but if you carry on a little more when you’re at home to verse 15, you’ll see that on the seventh day they went around seven times instead of once. After that as the priests blew their trumpets, so the Israelite army shouted strongly and the walls came tumbling down.

The Israelites had trusted God and did exactly as He had said and their first city in the Promised Land was taken. How amazing!

It’s not amazing really! God’s people listened to what God said, were obedient and then God did the rest. Has that every happened in your life?

Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth a few times. A part of his first letter was our second Reading. Paul told them that he doesn’t run in life’s race like someone running aimlessly. He had a definite aim or goal. There was a purpose to what he was doing.

We can have lots of great goals in life and depending on our age and circumstances they will change. For the past 35 years, the greatest goal in my life has been to please God. That’s what makes me excited. It’s what gives me a spring in my step nearly every morning!

The Israelites could have tried to go around the city of Jericho and come back to it when they'd sorted out a few villages and medium-sized towns. God didn't want them to do that. Jericho was large and it was in their path, but God had plans to sort that city out.

Today, God commands His people (that's you and me) to be strong and very courageous to the things He is calling us to do. We need to listen to Him, do what He says and then thank Him when surprising and mysterious things happen. Things that mankind couldn't possibly have done anything about.

William Temple said, "When I pray coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't."

Let's all pray for amazing things to happen in Nuneaton. We desperately need God's touch here. Let's be ready to be part of God's answer and then praise Him for what He does. Let's endeavour to spend time with God more, to know Him better and to open our hearts and lives to all that He has for us – whether that be something enormous like city walls falling down or something much smaller but still significant. Let's consecrate ourselves to serve Him and to trust Him when that is easy and when that is hard.