

1. Obedience, Why Does It Matter?

Who knows the story of Jericho

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down.

You may talk about your men of Gideon.

You may talk about your men of Saul.

But there's none like good ol' Joshua at the battle of Jericho.

Today we are not going to talk about Jericho

We are going to talk about what happens right after

Looking at the story of Achan and the city of Ai

Summary

God said don't take any of the things from Jericho

Achan took some things from Jericho

So, God said good luck fighting the next battle without me then!

Next battle at Ai doesn't go so hot

Achan is revealed to have the things from Jericho

Achan pays for it and all the stuff is destroyed

God says, alright I'm team Israel again

Ai is defeated

There you go

See you next week!

But

Let's break it down

God commands the Israelites

To stay away from the devoted things in Jericho

Why?

2. Joshua 6:18

But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.

God is very clear what would happen

Don't take

Or

Destruction

But what is not so clear
Is the why behind it
“Why can’t I”

Fairly straightforward
In the battle of Jericho
God was bringing judgment on the nation of Canaan
It wasn’t because
They obstacle or inconvenience for Israel
But
Because total rebellion to God
And
In league with the occult

So
Don’t take those devoted things
They are demonic in nature
Totally anti-God

Don’t take those
For they will bring about destruction on you

3. God Always Has A Good Reason

When he asks us to do something
Or
When he asks us not to do something
There is often a greater purpose
That we can’t see

Sometimes we can see it

But often
We can’t see the big picture

God always has a good reason

And in addition to demonic stuff
God has something to say about the treasure

4. Joshua 6:19

All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury.

This is the first battle
The Israelites make in the conquest of Canaan
It is the first city to fall
God has a thing about firsts
“Put God first before all others”
“Give to God first”

This is the same

God is saying
This is the first of many battles
So
All the wealth
All the money
All the loot boxes
All your base are belong to us
Everything here in Jericho
Give to me first

So
We now know
God said don't take the devoted things
And
Don't take the money

“Don't dip your toes into the demonic”
“And don't steal from me”

So now we know the why
Which makes what happens next
Seem absurd

5. Joshua 7:1

But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

Interesting to note
Only one man
Took the things

Only one man was really guilty
Achan

Yet
The whole nation was affected

The whole nation would suffer
Because of one man's actions

Like Adam - the Apple
Like David - Bathseba
Like so many

-Side note-

Is there something you are doing
Or
Are not doing
That is affecting the whole

6. 1 Corinthians 5:6

Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

Think about it
Our sins
Our mistakes
Hold us back from being used fully by God

Our reluctance
Our hesitation
Holds us back from being used fully by God

Either direction
Sin or reluctance
We are not reaching our full potential
We are not being used by God to the fullest

Thus
The church is weakened
When we sin

The church is weakened

When choose to go our own way
Instead of God's

Imagine
What this church
Creekside
Would look like if we were all blameless
Just like Jesus
Would look like if we were
All in
Just like the disciples

Imagine it

-Side note done-

Moving forward
We see an unfolding
Of self-reliance
Over confidence in human strength
The "I'm pretty much the best" mentality

See
Joshua sends scouts
To investigate Ai
They come back
And their report is interesting
And Joshua's response is even more interesting

7. Joshua 7:3-4

When they returned to Joshua, they said, "Not all the army will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary the whole army, for only a few people live there." So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai,

This is
Overconfidence for real
Because
Later in the story
Find out the city held
12,000
And only send 3,000?!
Woof

Probably said it like this
"We just defeated the city of Jericho"
"A much larger and stronger city"
"Just by walking around it!"
"We can take this weenie city out easily"
"Don't bother the whole army"
"We got this"

Now
This could have been faith
That God was with them
And they would surely prevail

Either way
It didn't matter
Because God was in fact
Not with them

We can see this so clearly
By Joshua's response

See it there
I underlined
It's so profound
It's screaming out at me
The silence

Joshua said nothing
More importantly
He said nothing to God

He just says "ok"
He doesn't consult with God at all
He takes his own initiative

The victory at Jericho
Made him overly confident
Maybe he thought he had God's help already
"For God had given us this land"

But he didn't ask
He didn't talk to God
He didn't put God first

If he had
Maybe things would have gone differently
Maybe
God revealed what Achan did
And that would be that

But he didn't do anything

8. God Always Has Something To Say

He is trying to communicate
Something to us

But
Either we don't ask
Or we aren't listening
Or we are distracted by our own self

With Joshua
He was distracted by himself
So he didn't ask

With Jericho
Joshua was in constant communication with God
Joshua knew he had no power to win that battle
But
When when the opponent was weaker
He felt he could do it on his own

"I've won before"
"I can win again"

But
The success of Israel
Always depended on their surrender to God
Their connection to God

And
Achan's rebellion
Showed that they were not surrendered to God

Therefore
They were powerless

Before even
Relatively small and weak enemies

Here's what it cost them

9. Joshua 7:5

who killed about thirty-six of them... At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water.

This here is a reality check
A slap to the face to wake up

36 men died!
How many died at Jericho
A much more difficult city
0

Now
36 men
Really isn't that many
In comparison to 100,000 army size
Of Israel
But
The meaning of those 36 lost lives
Was disastrous

The defeat at Ai
Showed that without God's help
All would be lost

And
The people began to panic
And logically
For
If God didn't fight for them
They could expect only defeat

And
This reality slap
It worked
Joshua falls on his face
Pleading to God

Joshua 7:6-9

Whaa whaa
Whoa is me
Why have you forsaken us
God please change your heart toward us
Boo hoo

Then God's response

10. Joshua 7:10-12

The Lord said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction."

God's like
"What are you doing?"
"Get up."
"This isn't my fault."
"I didn't fail you."
"You failed me."
"I told you already."
"Don't take the devoted things."
"But you took those things anyway."
"Why are you here anyway?"
"You should be out dealing with the disobedience among the people."
"For disobedience has made the difference here."

God continues
And tells Joshua what to do

11. Joshua 7:13

'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them.'

Joshua says this to all the people
One day in advance
He prepares them
And that's important

Goes on to say

Tribe by tribe
Clan by clan
Family by family
Man by man

We will find who did this
Who disobeyed God
Who stole from God
Who has brought calamity to us all

One day in advance

And yet, Achan does nothing
This is wild
How could he just sit there
And do nothing

-Another side note-

Don't we often
Hope to avoid
Punishment
When we do something wrong

Achan was hoping to be overlooked
To get away with it

He was hoping
He wouldn't have to reveal that it was him
To tell his friends
To tell his family
That he had let them down

Don't we often do this
We will keep something buried
For the longest time
Because we don't want
Others to know
We don't want others
To look at us differently

We like to keep that persona
Of perfection on

That mask
That everything really is “good” or “fine”
Just like we answer
Whenever someone asks us
“How are you doing?”
“Oh Good”
“Yeah I’m fine”

But the open confession
And honesty
Being real
Is granted painful
At times
But also
So healing
And
Much more powerful
Than the being forced to reveal something
Because there is no escape

-End side note-

So
Achan does nothing
And
The next day comes
Verses 16-18
We see
His Tribe - Judah
His Clan - Zerahites
His Family - Zimri
Himself - Achan

Were chosen

Here’s the thing
God knew all along
The moment he took the things
God knew
Yet
Achan kept it a secret from human eyes
Joshua didn’t know
Achan’s family didn’t know

But God knew

12. God Sees Everything

This one might hurt for some of you
Because
This is like
When the manager is around
Don't you usually give your best (or better)
When the boss is there watching

Now
No one likes the "helicopter" boss
That's why I said this one might hurt a bit
Because God is literally always watching
He see everything
Omniscient

For some of you
That's scary
He sees all the bad that I do

For some of you
That's comforting
He's always ready to have my back when trouble strikes

Either way
It is a reality

So
Looking back at Achan

I bet
Taking those things
It pleased Achan
He was pleased to have them
Pleased with the thrill of the breaking the rules
Pleased to have his wealth increase
Pleased not immediately found out
Pleased able to hide them

Those pleasures real
But fleeting, temporary

Because
36 men died!
Because of what Achan did
Because of Achan's
Disobedience

Listen
The penalty of sin
The penalty of disobedience
Will always outweigh
Any pleasure that sin
Or that disobedience gives

In the moment it feels good
It feels right
But in the end it isn't the best

Achan probably rationalized his disobedience in many ways
"No one will know."
"These things won't be missed."
"Think of how cool I'll look in this robe"
"The people I am taking this from are bad people, they deserve it."
"I'm not hurting anyone."
"I deserve this."

But
None of these excuses justified what Achan did

Listen
We also
Make excuses for our disobedience
"No one will know if I don't do it"
Or
"No one will know if I do do it"
"I'm just too busy"
"I don't feel ready for that"
"Someone else will probably take care of that"

I've been there

Camp
So many times
Felt called to pray for student I didn't know
Chickened out

In the moment I felt relieved
Oh good I don't have to be uncomfortable
But in the end
I realized I was just a coward
And more importantly
I was disobedient

Reality is
That student needed me in that moment
And God knew it
God Always Has A Good Reason
But I decided to live in comfort
Make excuses
And ultimately I let that student down
I let God down

Now
I am a firm believer
That God will always make a way
Even if I am not the way he ends up using

He wants to use me
To use us
But if I fail to meet his call
It's not like his plans shatter
No
He just goes to plan 2.0
That other guy
Right there

In my student at camp example
Every time
For real
Someone else would step up
And meet God's call in that moment

And that feeling of relieved
Would wash over me again
"Oh good. Someone else is praying for them."
"I'm off the hook."

But what if I had just been obedient?
What if I had reached the call

That God had for me in that moment?

Final point

13. God's Way Is Rewarding

14. Joshua 8:2

You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves.

God had planned for Israel
To reap the rewards of taking all the other cities
Just not Jericho

If only Achan had waited
If only he had obeyed God at Jericho
He could have received much from the battle at Ai
In fact more!
"And livestock"
That's an investment property

But hear me
So often
We can get locked into our present moment
And not look beyond
At how God could bless us

I don't want to feel uncomfortable now
So I won't step out in faith
But God has a blessing in store if I do

We might steal now
Because we won't have enough
But God has a blessing ready for us tomorrow

Might hold back from God
Thinking we have so little
But God has a blessing for those who are faithful with little

15. Obedience, Why Does It Matter?

16. God Always Has A Good Reason

For everything he does

For everything he asks us to do
And asks us not to do

God Always Has Something To Say

God wants to communicate with us
He wants to speak into our lives
He wants us to reach out full potential
And we need to keep a direct line
Of communication with him to do so

God Sees Everything

Nothing is a secret from God
He sees all things
If he's always watching
Shouldn't obedience come naturally

God's Way Is Rewarding

Just like God has a good reason
His reason is often for our good
To bless us
To strengthen us
To grow us

Obedience matters to God
What is God calling you to do?
What is God calling you not to do?
Will you be obedient?
Or will you be like Achan?

Pray
For obedience
Not reluctantly