

Flip through the book of Joshua and you're likely to stop at all the high points; the falling walls of Jericho, the sun standing still in the sky at God's command, and that famous quote **"but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."** The stories of war and victory are all over Joshua as the leader by that name brings the Israelites into the Promised Land.

One account we probably don't talk about as much is before us this morning. It's a story with all the intrigue of a mystery; greed and selfishness of a drama. It's a story about wanting what you can't have. It's about temptation and a fall. It's a story all too familiar to us because it sounds like our lives and the temptations we face. Sometimes they overwhelm us. Like the individual this morning it doesn't always look good for us.

The first lesson is where we find a young Israelite facing a huge temptation that he gets caught up in; a temptation that led to sin which is dragging the whole nation down. Something has to be done and God takes action through Joshua. If ever you were in doubt about how serious God is today's the day to listen up...

**God's serious about temptation
Don't jump into it
Christ won a victory over it**

As the walls of Jericho fell down the Israelites knew God was fighting for them at full strength. Jericho was only the first step into the Promised Land. Ai was next and more communities after that. With God on their side nothing could stop them. God only gave them one simple instruction regarding the plunder, **"Keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them."** God was providing for the people so they had no need for the plunder. All the Israelites followed the order, except one.

When Israel went to fight the next small town with only 3000 men thinking it would be a rout anyway God had other plans. The Israelites were defeated. Joshua was beside himself. God seemed to be turning against them. But why? Joshua knew nothing about the devoted things hidden among the camp of Israel. Rather than have Joshua spend days searching the camp, God gets to the source of the problem. He's that serious about temptation and sin. Layer after layer of tribe, clan, and family is peeled away until the culprit is revealed. Achan.

Achan probably thought he hid his terrible deed pretty well. It was a big camp and only a small amount of stuff. You might think investment firms, car makers, or insurance companies are big. If you took a little who would notice? Who would ever care to find it? Achan must have thought how God was caring for him wasn't enough. He needed and wanted more. So he stole it directly from God. Maybe you aren't bold enough to make demands of God, but you're bold enough with the government. What have they given you? All they do is take, when do you get to take? Maybe you just keep income to yourself. Hide your finances like Achan, thinking they'll never come looking.

God was well aware of what was buried beneath Achan's tent. God is well aware of what's buried in your hearts. Every temptation you've ever faced, every temptation you've ever given in to he knows. He knows because he experienced them first hand. Satan's temptation of Jesus is just a fraction of what Jesus faced. Jesus didn't jump into these temptations. There could be no easy way out for him. He must go to the cross. Jesus defeated Satan by resisting the devil's temptations with nothing but God's Word. One slip and everything Jesus came for would've been ruined. But Jesus came to forgive temptations and sins, not jump into them. On the cross he did just that.

Joshua put Achan under oath, just like a witness taking the stand in a courtroom. **"My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."** Achan knew he was caught. What he says is pure confession. **"It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel."** Do you confess your sins as plainly as Achan did? Not hiding anything and not blaming someone else. Just come clean on what you did with no qualifications. Recognizing our sinfulness is exactly what God wants. When he hears your confession he's already poured out the forgiveness for that sin in his own Son.

As the messengers ran off to dig through his stuff, Achan's heart was breaking. He knew exactly what they'd find in the ground. He knew he'd buried the plunder he would never get to enjoy in the sand there. He knew what was coming wouldn't be pretty. God was serious about sin and temptation. He had messed up and God was angry. No way Joshua would say, "That's alright Achan, you made a mistake, you'll do better the next time." Instead, **"Joshua said, Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today."** It was too late for Achan, whose name means trouble. It's not too late for you. There's a change for you. Achan's sins earned him death and so have your sins. But another death has achieved a different result for you. Christ won victory over your temptations.

Satan was looking for a bigger defeat than Achan when he took on Jesus. Achan got greedy thinking God wasn't taking care of him. Satan tried to convince Jesus God wasn't taking care of him either. Just make some bread, it's that easy. Satan would love to trick you into thinking God's not caring for you. You deserve the toy or video game your parents say no to. You should have the same tool as your neighbor. Achan wanted to hide his action in the dirt. Satan tempted Jesus into thinking no one would have to know he took the easy way to glory. Just bow down to Satan one time, that's it. Satan wants you to think about covering up all your sins too. Bury them in your heart, no one will know.

Thankfully Jesus didn't take the bait. He stood up to Satan with Scripture and won the battle. When Jesus defeated Satan in the desert it set up his ultimate victory. Jesus showed he was the perfect sacrifice and substitute for us. Satan has no power over us because Jesus secured our victory completely first in the desert and finally on the cross.

Now we can live like it, like victory is ours already. We change the way we approach temptation. Run the other way when you feel temptation to sin coming on. **"Avoid every kind of evil,"** Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. Get as far away from whatever tempts you. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, take a page from Jesus' playbook and fight back using the Word of God. When sin is knocking at your door answer by saying with Paul, **"We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?"** I don't want to follow this temptation or sin because my Savior lives for me and gives me new life. And when you fall into temptation be ready to confess your sins to God and repent. **"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love."** Stand under the cross of Christ and receive the full forgiveness for your sins.

Achan's story is tragic. Sinfulness leads to death. But Achan's story is also there for us to learn from. More importantly it's there to compare with Jesus' story. Jesus is the perfect Achan opposite. Everything Achan gave in to Jesus did not. Everything Achan took Jesus did not. Everything that Achan denied about God Jesus did not. Jesus was our perfect opposite too. That's what makes Achan's story instructive. Only when we see his tragedy and ours next to Jesus' triumph do we know fully God's seriousness over temptation and sin. He doesn't want us jumping into it at all. And for the times we have fallen into sin Christ won the victory.