

CSI: Joshua

Trustworthiness

Joshua 7:10-13

August 8, 2010

So, if you have been with us the past few weeks, you'll know that we have been studying the book of Joshua, looking at various character traits exhibited throughout his, and others lives. We're going to be continuing in our series today by looking at an event in the history of Israel, more specifically, an event in the life of individual who will be remembered throughout the ages... as the one who screwed up big time.

, and so, to understand what comes after it, we have to have some sense of what came before it. A little bit of background...

Joshua and the army of Israel had just come from a major victory at Jericho where God told them to march around the city seven times, and then at the sound of the trumpet, to yell with all their might. When they did this, the city walls fell. Now, God had given the people very specific instructions about what to do with the city, the inhabitants, and all the plunder – the Silver, the Gold, and the like. These things were to be consecrated and set apart for the Lord. He warned the people of Israel with this warning in *Joshua 6:18-19*

¹⁸ "Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. ¹⁹ Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury.

Joshua Chapter 6 ends in great victory, as Israel completely destroys everything, and takes all of the precious plunder and dedicates it to the Lord in his Treasury. Now... we pick up in chapter 7 with 'but'...

[Read verse 1]

Okay, stop. One word in and we have already encountered a key shift. Whenever you see the word 'but', you have to pause and realize that with that one word, some fundamental change is taking place. What comes after the 'but' is going to be a shift from what came before it. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites.

Let's pause again... This initial verse functions as a set up for the rest of the chapter. This man named Achan sees all this loot... tons of it... and something takes place in his heart and mind which prompts him to take some. He probably thought, whose even going to notice that this is gone. No one is watching, no one will ever know. And that, my friends, is where we see this thing called Trustworthiness.

Trust... can you be trusted to do this? Or to *not* do that? But it's more than just trust. It's about our words lining up with our actions and our actions aligning with who we claim to be. It's about doing what is right no matter what... not because you will gain from it, but because it is simply what is right. There is a standard test that you can use to evaluate your level of trustworthiness, and it comes down to this:

Trustworthiness can be seen in what you do when no one is watching – what you do, when you think you can get away with it.

And this man named Achan, thought he could get away with it... little did he know what was about to happen. Continue with me in verse 4:2-13.

So the army of Israel goes to the city, at least part of them...and they get schooled. Chased out like rabbits. Israel's strength had always come from God, they didn't lose anyone in their previous endeavors... they crushed the opposition, and were feared throughout the land. And yet, here, not only did they lose lives, but they were utterly defeated and shamed... as well as the name of their God.

In verse 6, Joshua and the elders come before God in anguish, because they begin to understand the implications of the loss.

I don't know if you ever had one of those moments... I know I have, and I'd be willing to bet that most of you have too. You know... when you do some thing real dumb, or you do something out of anger, without thinking... and then, when the stupidity or the rage calms down... and all of those implications start flooding in. All that fear that their enemy had for them... their reputation, and more importantly God's reputation... was now put to shame. Was this the beginning of the end for them? Emotional anguish plagued these leaders who, in the midst of their pain and confusion, even started to question God himself.

And then God steps in and He informs Joshua that Israel has sinned. This is the result of missing the mark, not paying attention, lying...sin. And Israel cannot continue, cannot win a battle or even have God with them until they deal with this issue. You may be curious as to why there is this constant reference to Israel sinning, when it was really just one man – Achan. What you have to understand is that Israel lived with a sense of corporate identity. They functioned as one. If one sinned, it affected them all. It's a "one bad apple spoils the whole bunch" understanding of life.

In America we're big on the independent individual: I, me, and myself. It's important for us to recognize that sin – in this case a broken trust – a loss of integrity and honesty effects all of us because we share life together...we're a community.

A lack of trustworthiness, like all sin, always does damage to more than just yourself.

You can't say: 'why don't people just leave me alone and mind their own business. I'll do what I want to do cause it's my life... it doesn't affect anyone else'. This view couldn't be farther from the truth. What you do, or don't do, affects the people around you. To some degree, we are all connected. And little did Achan know that his choice would take the lives of thirty six men, would deeply grieve the leaders of Israel, effect the entire nation's reputation, and worst of all, belittle God's reputation throughout the Land. I often wonder if we ever really grasp the widespread effects of our own sin? Do we really get the consequences of our actions and the ripple effect they have?

Continue with me in verse 14-19. God is giving instructions to Joshua here:

The process is methodical. God does it this way to have all the people actively involved in the process, so that they would feel the full weight of this truth: God knows everything. How many times do we do things in secret... thinking, ah... no one is watching? Or have you ever considered doing something you would normally not give 2 seconds of your time to... but.... An opportunity presented itself where you thought that you could truly get away with it? 1 Corinthians 4:5 says that God **"will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives."** It is nothing but pure, simple, ignorance for us to act in such a way that we think we are going to keep secret what we've done. And yet somehow... against all rationale... we find ourselves doing just that... thinking that we can get away with it because "no one" is watching.

The truth is, **No matter how far, how secluded, or how secretive we are – we cannot hide from God.** It seems as human beings we are prone to believing delusions. One way or another... we get found out. And then there's nothing left but the now cold, hard, bitter, truth. Achan is forced to come face to face with that in verse 20.

It's important for us to take note of what happened here in Achan's life. It's the same thing that happens to us. Look at the process: "I saw...I wanted ... I took."

A lack of trustworthiness, like all sin, starts in the mind, moves through heart and is seen in our actions.

He sees it...ideas pop up in his mind. Ideas like how much power and prestige would come from having this great wealth. Or the idea of never having to work again – how good that would feel. Scholars estimate that the amount of stuff he took was what a worker of the time would make in his entire lifetime. Yes... and as he cultivated these ideas... his desire grew... and became overwhelming. The desire turned into action. And he took. We go through this process more often than we would admit.

Now, I wish I could tell you that after this, Achan confessed his sin, God forgave him, and everything went on happily ever after. But my friends, that is not how it works. Achan, and everything and everyone associated with this evil, was completely destroyed. God commanded the entire nation to put to death this evil among them. Now, I know. This can be difficult for us to understand. We struggle because we live post Jesus. His death on the Cross changed everything but, we're reminded in Romans 6:23 that - ***the wages of sin is death.*** Where sin is, death is right there with it.

God is good – in the purist sense of the word - and to say that the wages of sin is death is like saying that evil, because it is evil, must be completely destroyed (that is part of what 'the good' does – eliminates evil). In this text we have the nation, the people, the body of Israel destroying the evil within them through the physical death of one of their own. It's a picture of what each of us must do on smaller, more personal level.

Romans 8:13 says ***"For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live"***

And likewise, it tells us in Colossians 3:5 *to "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry"* Do you see the picture here?

A lack of trustworthiness, like all sin, must be identified, isolated, and eliminated.

We see this happening on a national level in this account. But because of what Jesus Christ has done, we are saved from that death. You see, because of our sin, someone had to die...that's what Jesus did on the cross for you and me. We're called to die daily to sin. That's why Jesus said anyone who wants to follow me must take up their cross daily. Their cross? An instrument of death – elimination.

And why is this so important? The wages of sin is death – We can see it when we turn on the news, a story of how greed and lust leads to murder. Sin can lead to physical death but, what about another kind of death. How many of you have had a lack of trust bring death to a relationship? A lack of integrity drive a wedge between true love and community with others? Why specifically, is a lack of trustworthiness so devastating? Because:

Trustworthiness is a foundational aspect of community and relationships: with each other and with God.

Trust.... It's so integral, foundational to all of human interaction. Have you ever told someone a secret, something deep and personal that you didn't want anyone else to know, and then they broke that trust? Did you feel the disconnect creeping into that relationship? Did you notice how deep that wound cuts you? To give someone your complete trust is the most intimate, personal thing you can give them.

Are you starting to see why this is so serious to God? Cause on the flipside of all this broken trust, there is true, pure, genuine integrity. A Trustworthiness that cultivates relationships, community, intimacy with God, and this is who we are called to be. It's what God wants for our lives. Despite the fact that we all have histories of doing what we know is wrong. God has given us all, not a second chance, but many second chances. And every day, by shedding some of the old and gaining some of the new, dying to ourselves and our sin we become more of what we were always intended to be.