

Sunday AM Service ~ May 21, 2023

Service for Swansea and Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome and Prayer

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. (Psalm 19)*

Almighty God, you are a God who made all things, for the benefit of your glory. In the beginning you made the world around us, and made us to have a special place within your creation. "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Lord, we live in a world where there are many distractions that draw us away from worshipping You. Thank you that even though we are disobedient you continue to love us as your children and continue to show us your mercy. We give you thanks and praise that because of your grace you have redeemed us and displayed a love to us that we cannot earn, and that is not deserved. We give you thanks that through Christ's obedience, and His death on the cross, that the price for sin has been paid – once, for all so that what was once unclean can be made clean. Thank you, Lord that through the resurrection of Christ and his defeat over death, we can be confident that those who place their faith in Jesus will also be raised to eternal life with You. Father God, we pray that as we continue to study your word in the bible today that we will have soft, teachable hearts that yearn to learn how you would have us live as your people. In Christ's name we pray, Amen

Song – Come People of the Risen King

[Come People of the Risen King \(with lyrics\) - Keith and Kristyn Getty - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Come, people of the Risen King
Who delight to bring Him praise
Come all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in</p> | <p>3. Come, young and old from every land
Men and women of the faith
Come, those with full or empty hands
Find the riches of His grace
Over all the world, His people sing
Shore to shore we hear them call
The Truth that cries through every age:
"Our God is all in all"!</p> |
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Chorus

*Rejoice, rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice; O Church of Christ, rejoice!*

2. Come, those whose joy is morning sun
And those weeping through the night
Come, those who tell of battles won
And those struggling in the fight
For His perfect love will never change
And His mercies never cease
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace

Bible Reading – Joshua 7:1-26 (NIV)

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. ² Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and spy out the region." So the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ 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." ⁴ So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, ⁵ who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water. ⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, "Alas, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!" ⁸ Pardon your servant, Lord. What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? ⁹ The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name? ¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?" ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ "Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, '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.' ¹⁴ "In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the LORD chooses shall come forward clan by clan; the clan the LORD chooses shall come forward family by family; and the family the LORD chooses shall come forward man by man. ¹⁵ Whoever is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the LORD and has done an outrageous thing in Israel!" ¹⁶ Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was chosen. ¹⁷ The clans of Judah came forward, and the Zerahites were chosen. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was chosen. ¹⁸ Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen. ¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and honour him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me." ²⁰ Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." ²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³ They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD. ²⁴ Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. ²⁶ Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Therefore, that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

Announcements 21/5/23

Focus for the month – Marriage. It takes work to have a good marriage. Constant work. There are just so many things that can get in the way that without our constant attention, our marriages may struggle.

Because other than our relationship with God, our marriages need to be our next priority. Over and above our kids, our siblings, our jobs and our Church. That's why in May we want to clear out some time to think about how we do that. And to pray for all our marriages. And when we do that, please also pray for those who have lost a marriage partner, or are separated or divorced from their marriage partner or who have never been married. Each need God's help and love in their current situation.

Church Picnic: 21 May. Today we are having a church picnic at Harold Wesley Knight Reserve, Whitebridge. There is an enclosed kids' playground and an adjacent oval, with a Foodworks and a café around the corner. Bring your own lunch and picnic blanket/chairs. Meet at the park from 12:15pm. Inquiries - Simon Mulready.

Renew (women's conference) – Sat 27 May 9:15am - 3:30pm at Metford Community Baptist Church. Michelle Underwood will speak on Chapter 2 of John's gospel. A beautiful morning tea and lunch is included. Cost \$45 pp. Registrations close Mon 22 May. For more details and to register online: www.hgm.org.au/renew. For enquiries contact Linda Small.

New Elders/Deacons. Please keep NEXT Sunday 28th May free as we are hoping to induct Mal Wardrop as an elder of the Church (he has previously been ordained as an elder in a previous parish) and to set apart Jo Barlow, Matt James, Karen Logan and Robynne Wardrop as deacons. We hope to do that at both our Swansea and Charlestown morning services.

Family Fellowship. For all families with kids in the Year 3-9 age group. Please keep lunchtime on Sunday 28th free for the next get together. See Stephen for more details.

Exciting Proposal. We are planning to have a congregation discussion for 15-30 minutes after each of our services NEXT Sunday 28th May. During this time, we want to talk together about a proposal that our elders have been thinking about where we will link in with another local congregation and support them to strengthen their gospel witness in their area. No final decisions have been made as yet but we want to keep everyone fully briefed about what might eventuate. A discussion paper outlining the proposal will be sent to all those on Elvanto in the next day or so.

Men's Breakfast. At Swansea Church Hall 8am-9:30pm. Cost by donation. RSVP to Mal Wardrop by Thursday 1st June.

Lords Supper at all services on Sunday 4th June.

Elvanto. Are you currently receiving our weekly emails? If not now is the time to give us your contact details and we will add you onto our Church Management System (which is called Elvanto).

Church membership. Are you interested in becoming a member of our Church. If so, please see Stephen, Jon or one of the elders and we will talk you through what the process looks like.

Pledges. Our pledge campaign for our Charlestown redevelopment is due to end by the end of May. Of course, anyone can make a pledge after that but if we know by then we can start doing our sums as we prepare to enter the fine detail part of the process. Thanks to all those who have considered pledging whether they decided to pledge or not!

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Indonesia: Pray for Christians to boldly demonstrate and proclaim the grace and salvation of Jesus Christ. Pray for peace and protection for believers amid growing Islamic momentum and expansion. Pray for entire families to put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Pray for our political leaders: Pray for our leaders to be surrounded by helpful advisers whose hearts are open to the truth.

Pray for encouragement: "Do not fear, Abram, I am your shield; and your exceedingly great reward." (Genesis 15:1b). Pray we would know God's protection during difficult times. We would understand that if we have Christ we don't lack anything. Help to deepen our assurance of salvation and confidence in the gospel.

Pray for both Stuart Blanch and Rob Hearn's families as they prepare to farewell their Mums with funeral services later on this week.

Pray for Applebys. Praise God for the great news that Ruth is recovering well from her operation and test results are good and so no more treatment is needed. They will fly out for a conference on June 4 and Gilbert will start his new class but will then return to Australia to finalise all the paperwork for a long term return to IndoChina.

Song – Just a closer walk with Thee <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6Ks49apfIE>

I am weak but Thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

(Refrain)

Just a closer walk with Thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,
Daily walking close to Thee,
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

Thro' this world of toil and snares,
If I falter, Lord, who cares?

Who with me my burden shares?
None but Thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.

(Refrain)

When my feeble life is o'er,
Time for me will be no more;
Guide me gently, safely o'er
To Thy kingdom shore, to Thy shore.

(Refrain)

Bible Reading – Joshua 8:1-35

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. ²You 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. Set an ambush behind the city."³ So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best fighting men and sent them out at night ⁴with these orders: "Listen carefully. You are to set an ambush behind the city. Don't go very far from it. All of you be on the alert. ⁵I and all those with me will advance on the city, and when the men come out against us, as they did before, we will flee from them. ⁶They will pursue us until we have lured them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are running away from us as they did before.' So when we flee from them, ⁷you are to rise up from ambush and take the city. The LORD your God will give it into your hand. ⁸When you have taken the city, set it on fire. Do what the LORD has commanded. See to it; you have my orders."⁹ Then Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place of ambush and lay in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai—but Joshua spent that night with the people. ¹⁰Early the next morning Joshua mustered his army, and he and the leaders of Israel marched before them to Ai. ¹¹The entire force that was with him marched up and approached the city and arrived in front of it. They set up camp north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city. ¹²Joshua had taken about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. ¹³So the soldiers took up their positions—with the main camp to the north of the city and the ambush to the west of it. That night Joshua went into the valley. ¹⁴When the king of Ai saw this, he and all the men of the city hurried out early in the morning to meet Israel in battle at a certain place overlooking the Arabah. But he did not know that an ambush had been set against him behind the city.

¹⁵Joshua and all Israel let themselves be driven back before them, and they fled toward the wilderness.

¹⁶All the men of Ai were called to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were lured away from the city. ¹⁷Not a man remained in Ai or Bethel who did not go after Israel. They left the city open and went in pursuit of Israel. ¹⁸Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Hold out toward Ai the javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city." So Joshua held out toward the city the javelin that was in his hand.

¹⁹As soon as he did this, the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire. ²⁰The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke

of the city rising up into the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction; the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the wilderness had turned back against their pursuers. ²¹ For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that smoke was going up from it, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai. ²² Those in the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle, with Israelites on both sides. Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives. ²³ But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua. ²⁴ When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the wilderness where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it. ²⁵ Twelve thousand men and women fell that day—all the people of Ai. ²⁶ For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai. ²⁷ But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the LORD had instructed Joshua. ²⁸ So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day. ²⁹ He impaled the body of the king of Ai on a pole and left it there until evening. At sunset, Joshua ordered them to take the body from the pole and throw it down at the entrance of the city gate. And they raised a large pile of rocks over it, which remains to this day. ³⁰ Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, ³¹ as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings. ³² There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua wrote on stones a copy of the law of Moses. ³³ All the Israelites, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing the Levitical priests who carried it. Both the foreigners living among them and the native-born were there. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel. ³⁴ Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them.

Sermon – Broken Faith (Stephen Taylor)

There has been a new biopic realised recently on the life of boxer George Foreman. Foreman was a double world champion in the heavyweight division. He earned his first world championship when he was just 24 years of age and his second world championship at 45 years of age. But in between those two mountaintop experiences came the low point of his career, the 1974 Rumble in the Jungle, where he was knocked down by Muhammad Ali.

Slide 2

Now you would never guess what the picture on Foreman's screensaver on his computer back home is? Well, it is of the moment Muhammad Ali knocked him down in Zaire. He explains, *"I was out of boxing 10 years and the only picture that I saved was Muhammad Ali knocking me down. There I was going down from that punch, I kept that and looked at it all the time, mainly because I realised what a big moment that was for sports and for boxing and **it kept me humble**. And I will never forget that, and it's made me a far better person than if it had been me knocking him down."*

A picture of his lowest point kept George Foreman humble. And it was in between his two world championships that he found Christ. And became a preacher of the gospel. His humility led him to the one who could lift him up. Could change him. Could give him the victory. And that is I believe the message of Joshua 7 and 8.

Slide 3

You see God's people had crossed over the river Jordan and into the promised land and everyone is scared of them. They then marched around the city of Jericho and the walls fell down. For God was with them. The land was being given to them. The people were unified. What could possibly go wrong? Sin. Unfaithfulness. Pride. So the defeat of Ai for the people of God becomes their screen saver. Their reminder

that without God they are nothing. That sin promises so much but delivers so little. A lesson they can't ever afford to forget.

And before we look at our passage, isn't this a lesson that we can't afford to forget either? Because sin seeks to rob us of the promises of God. We too can get overconfident, complacent in our own goodness, in our own strength. Maybe we shouldn't have the trophies of our victories on our shelves but the pictures of defeat. To humble us. To remind us that sin is always crouching at the door. Sin is only one step away or one click away. And without God we are so weak that we will not be able to cope with its powerful temptations.

Slide 4

1. Let's begin with firstly, Unfaithful People (chapter 7)

"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."

Now Joshua 7 is not a whodunnit, a mystery where there are twists and turns throughout the story before the person responsible for the crime is finally found. It is instead a howcatchem. A tale where the perpetrator of the crime is revealed at the start and the story explains how the detective actually solves the crime. Here we are told right from the very beginning who does it. It was Achan. He was unfaithful. He didn't do what he was told to do.

But he was not the only one who was unfaithful. Notice that *"the Israelites were unfaithful"*. It is not just one person's fault because sin is like a virus. Its spreads. Its infectious. It goes from one place to another. Achan takes some of the plunder from Jericho but Joshua and the leaders are not without blame either.

Slide 5

²*"Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and spy out the region." So, the men went up and spied out Ai. ³When they returned to Joshua, they said, "Not all the army will have to go up against Ai. Send 2-3,000 men to take it and do not weary the whole army, for only a few people live there."*

Now do you notice something different about how they do this battle as against the last one? There is no mention of God's leading. No mention of Joshua enquiring of God. This time, the whole approach to Ai seems to proceed without even a thought toward God. The assistance of God here seems rather more to have been assumed than actively pursued.

Slide 6

They forget about God and they become complacent. We will only need a couple of thousand troops to win this victory. But they were wrong, oh so wrong. ⁴*"So about 3,000 went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, ⁵who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water."*

And this defeat made them lose courage. Their hearts melted with fear, wait a second that's how Rahab described the people of Jericho at the coming of the Israelites. But now the boot was on the other foot. The first taste of defeat and they lose their courage. And that leads to self-pity. Listen to how Joshua prays to the Lord in the aftermath of their defeat.

Slide 7

"Alas, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!" ⁸Pardon your servant, Lord. What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?" What? Joshua is beginning to sound like the Israelites in the desert. Whinging, complaining. Defeat hasn't made him turn inward, was this anything to do with me or my people? No, it has meant that he is blaming God.

¹⁰ "The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? ¹¹ **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. ¹² 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.

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Israel has been unfaithful. They took things that belonged to God. They stole from Him. And then they concealed it. And lied about it. For that's what happens with sin, it spreads. It weaves a web. It gets bigger and bigger. Like a cancer that grows over time so does our sin. So does our unfaithfulness to God. And over the next few verses God reveals the source of this sin. As they go through each of the tribes and family groups until Achan is exposed.

Slide 10

¹⁹ "Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and honour him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me." ²⁰ Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

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Do you see what happened? Achan saw. He saw something that wasn't his. A beautiful robe and some money. And he coveted. He wished it was his. And it was so easy. In this case he could simply take it, hide it and he would get away with it. Or so he thought. But the eyes of the Lord are on all people. And I am sure he was getting a queasy feeling in his stomach as his tribe, his family group, his family and then himself was carefully exposed.

He saw, he desired, he coveted, and he took. That's almost exactly the path of temptation leading to sin down which Satan led Eve. Do you remember? She looked at the forbidden fruit, she saw that it was beautiful, good to eat and useful for making one wise and she took it and she ate. That's what sin does. It gets its claws on us and if we linger too long, or hang around the wrong crowd, or open the wrong website or cultivate the wrong desires, you're gone.

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What made this even worse is what God had already given to Achan. He had cared for him and his family in the wilderness. He had brought them safely across the Jordan. He had given his army victory over Jericho. He already had much wealth as we find out in verse 24 that he had been given sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys and sheep. Yet in spite of all that he had, he wanted more.

Friends never underestimate the power of sin. Never think you have mastered covetousness. Never think you are too strong to be unfaithful. You know that don't you? You have seen faithful leaders fall? Grandparents walk away from the faith. Once strong believers now living like unbelievers. Because they were not humble. They became proud. They gave into unfaithfulness. But notice here that Achan's sin affects the whole people of God.

Slide 13

Israel is one people in the Lord. What one does affects the rest. The sin of Achan stops the rest of Israel from winning a victory in Ai. And similarly, our sin can affect our family and our Church family. Your unfaithfulness can come back to bite others. Come along to Church and gossip about someone else and the whole Church gets a bad reputation. Decide you won't go to Church and your partner, kids, grandkids decide if it's all right for you, it's alright for them. Marry an unbeliever and you open the door out of the Church for the rest of the family.

Slide 14

Imagine this. The ship you are on goes down and you are fortunate enough to escape onto a lifeboat. And then someone gets a saw and starts cutting a hole in the bottom. You complain but he says "What's it to do with you? I am only sawing under my own seat?" But the truth is, if he goes down so do you. One person's sin affects the whole community. Your sin affects me and my sin affects you. And here Achan's sin affects the whole of God's people.

And the result is that they lose the presence of God. And without the presence of God they lose the battle with Ai. And God's fierce anger is upon them. And His righteous judgement falls on the guilty party and his family who have been caught up in this web of deception. And this sin is so serious that they heap up a pile of rocks to remind God's people that sin is serious. Coveting is cancerous. Hiding is hideous. Unfaithfulness is unbelievably tragic.

Slide 15

Which is why Joshua 7 is in our Bibles. To remind you and me that sin is serious. That if you thinking you are doing well, be careful, lest you fall. It should humble us. There but for the grace of God goes I. Put that message on your screen saver. Put a picture of Achan on your mobile phone. Or a picture of your darkest hour. To remind you. Don't ever, ever forget God. Don't take his goodness for granted. Don't become proud. Don't covert what is not yours.

Which is why we need to meet each week with God's people, because these things matter. It is why we need to read the word of God daily to keep our feet on the ground. It is why we need to take the Lords Supper together because Jesus died for that sin. Friends, don't take it for granted. Don't forget. Don't live the way you used to live.

Sin is a con. It promises to give you what we already have in Christ. It is the theological equivalent of selling sand to the Arabs. In the word of David Strain, *"Sex and money, the abuse of alcohol, the pool of workaholism, the dangers of affluence and all the varied vices after which our hearts are constantly drawn. All of these promise us satisfaction and relief and joy and a sense of worth and the acceptance of others and a hundred other things besides."*

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But haven't we found – to our terrible disappointment – that while they may taste sweet in our mouths in the moment, they very soon turn bitter. They simply do not deliver. They do not deliver. But grace is sweeter than sin. Grace is more nourishing, more satisfying, more generous than all the illicit pleasures the world can offer. If only Achan had waited."

If only Achan had waited. Because when the tragedy of the defeat at Ai in chap 7 is turned into the glorious victory of chapter 8, the Israelites are given permission to take the spoils of victory. The first fruits of the land, the conquest of Jericho is given to God but from then on God gives permission to enjoy that beautiful robe and to keep that stash of gold and silver.

You see God is not a meanie. If you put him first you will not go without. If you seek first the Kingdom of God, he will give all these things unto you. But you have to wait for his time, not take it when you think its your time. If Achan had waited and obeyed, God would have given him a blessing. But because he ignored God's call, he instead suffered the curse. Because the things of Jericho were cursed and he took them to himself, he came under their curse. But if he was to wait in obedience, he would have come under God's blessing. So, we turn from

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2. Unfaithful people to a faithful response (8:1-29)

8 *"Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his*

land. 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. Set an ambush behind the city."

This time they look to God for his marching orders and he gives them his word. A simple but effective plan where they look like they are going to use the same tactics as the first time but this time with a slightly bigger force. They attract the people of Ai and Bethel out of their walled cities. They withdraw like last time and then they spring the trap. The troops lying in wait come out and cut off their enemies' retreat, so now they are completely surrounded. So, when the retreating army of Joshua turns and attacks, they go on to win a memorable victory.

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And then Joshua is told to hold up his javelin in the air, a bit like Moses holding up his hands in prayer against the Amalekites in Exodus 17. And while Joshua's javelin points to God's great power, they win the battle. And they are again called to punish the disobedient people of Ai and Bethel. Whose wickedness have grown and grown over the years until God has no option but to judge them for their sins. And that means that their whole city is wiped off the map and another pile of rocks is set up. Signalling God's just judgement. Telling everyone that disobedience will not win in the end. God will give all people the justice they deserve.

Slide 19

But in doing we see that God's judgement is given to all people who are unfaithful. The people in the land are judged but so are the people of God like Achan who are found to be unfaithful. If he takes the things that are given over to destruction, he too will be destroyed. But in contrast if people like Rahab act faithfully and align themselves with the things of God and the people of God, they will be delivered from destruction.

That should give all outsiders hope. Their faithfulness can help them escape God's just judgement. But it should make all insiders humble. We too can come under the just judgement of God. Every outsider is only one confession away from salvation. Every insider must watch that he doesn't become unfaithful and walk away from the blessings God promises to give to those who are part of his chosen people. Rahab's confession gets herself and her family saved. Achan's unfaithfulness means his and his family are condemned. Which leads us

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3. From an unfaithful people to a faithful response and lastly to a faithful God.

³⁰ "Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, ³¹ as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no iron tool had been used."

Joshua learns his lesson and turns from war to worship. From success to submission. He stops the taking of the land, why there is still a long, long way to go in claiming the whole of the promised land and instead thanks God for his faithfulness. That God is keeping his promises. He is providing good things for his people. He is truly with them and because of that he is worthy of their worship.

This is true success. Not winning the battle but acknowledging the battle belongs to the Lord. You see the real heart of the issue is not whether they will beat the people of Canaan but will they be faithful in the midst of the land of promise. Will they remember or forget? Will they trust God or go their own way? Will they covet or will they be content?

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And its interesting they build an altar on Mount Ebal. Now when they read the book of Deuteronomy a few verses later, half the people stand on the heavily wooded, lush, fertile Mount Gerizim to pronounce the blessings of God and the other half stand on the bare, barren Mt Ebal to remind the people of the curses. But the altar is built on the mount of curses. And a sacrifice is made to take the curse away. To pay the

penalty for their sin so that the curses would no longer come upon them because of their unfaithfulness. Instead the blessings would come to them because their unfaithfulness has been taken away.

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And here they are determined to do everything according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses. ³²“*There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua wrote on stones a copy of the law of Moses.*” Joshua reminds them that the law is not for people past but for the people of the present and the future.

³⁴“*Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law.* ³⁵ *There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them.*”

All the law. For all the people. And all the foreigners. If they are going to be faithful, they need to know the God of faithfulness. If they are going to be faithful, they need to understand what true faithfulness looks like. If they are going to be faithful, they need to remember the covenant and the promises that God has given them. If they are going to be faithful, they will only be able to do that if God does something to make them faithful.

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Which leads us to the promise that God makes to his people in Hosea 2:14-15. There the valley of Achor is mentioned again. But here in Hosea God says, “*There I will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.*” A door of hope. How can this place be a door of hope for a sinner who deserves the judgment of God? The Valley of Achor is a door of hope because here, one man dies for the people. And the wonder of the Christian Gospel is that in the fullness of time, in the Lord Jesus Christ, God the just Judge Himself became that one man and bore the judgment for us. We are the guilty ones, yet we are spared and He was instead taken.

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But what is more, that one man not only forgives us our sin and our unfaithfulness but makes us into one of his faithful ones. Listen to Hebrews 2:17-18, “*For this reason he had to be **made like them**, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he **might make atonement for the sins** of the people.* ¹⁸ *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, **he is able to help those who are being tempted.***”

Christ’s faithfulness both gifts us our forgiveness in the face of God’s just judgement and equips us in our weakness, in our unfaithfulness, in our pride to live faithfully for him.

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Sin is serious. And this passage is a cautionary tale to you and me. Beware of unfaithfulness. Cultivate humility. Be careful that you do not fall. Find an image that tells you that and make it your screensaver. Then lean on the Lord Jesus. Follow the instructions of the Lord Jesus. Look to the Lord Jesus so that our faithfulness will not rest on ourselves but on him. That he might do his work in us, sending his spirit to us, allow his word to change us so that we can be changed by his power into a faithful people who follow our utterly amazing faithful God.

Song – Yet not I but Christ in me

[CityAlight ~ Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me \(Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh how strange and divine,
I can sing, "All is mine"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me</p> | <p>3. No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave
To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released,
I can sing, "I am free"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me</p> |
| <p>2. The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed
To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won,
and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me</p> | <p>4. With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete,
still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me</p> |

Benediction

*"For this reason he had to be **made like them**, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he **might make atonement for the sins** of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, **he is able to help those** who are being tempted."*