

Date: October 11, 2026

Texts: Joshua 7. 1-12; 24. 1, 14-15 / Revelation 7. 9-12

Title: "What's Your Story? : Joshua"

Intro -

our passage drops us into the story of Joshua in the immediate aftermath of
the Battle of Jericho (of choir anthem renown...)

as with many an OT story - well-known to many of us...

passing familiar to most all

since it is an important backdrop to today's events at the battle of Ai...

let's take a quick look back:

Joshua has brought the Israelites to the edge of the land God had promised...

where God tells him to take off his shoes, because he is standing on
holy ground

(i.e. - this is not a normal "conquest..."

this is the realization of a sacred promise...

this is - holy...)

God speaks to Joshua and tells him:

"I have delivered into your hands this city and all that is therein..."

note - I *have* delivered...

even though neither Joshua nor God had done anything
as of yet...

(but - for God, and - what God wants Joshua to know -
it is as good as done...

it is a sacred fulfillment of a sacred promise...)

and as such...

it is "harem" -

it is wholly devoted to God...

(the terms of which are spelled out: 6. 17 - 19)

note - this is tough for us to swallow...

this is tough for us to wrap our heads around...

- was that really necessary...?

wasn't that a little extreme...?

C'mon, man...!

cf. - not going to go into detail or argue for or against it...

it is there, and it forms the crucial backdrop for the failure at Ai...

but... it is important for us to "see it" - as it is reflective of

two important aspects:

1). God is an all-demanding God...

there is no room for half measures...

he offers *His* all, and expects ours...

2). the people of Jericho are not, as we often like to see people in

scenarios like this - "innocents..."

rather - they were actively opposed to God (enemies of God...)

and stood as a barrier to the realization of God's purposes

(and 3rd...) -

the aspect of "harem" speaks to the need to excise the evil that
confronts us

in the same way as you don't go to a surgeon and ask if you can just
get half of a malignant tumor removed...

so here -

"harem..." Devoted...

and - as we read in vs. 26 - under the curse / forever in ruins

which brings us to what we might call:

"Achan's folly"

I) Ai

cf. - maybe Achan didn't get the memo...

maybe he was late to the meeting...

inadvertently muted his device when this was discussed...

maybe the loot just looked too enticing, and -

who would miss just a couple of items anyway...?

but he took some - in direct disobedience to the rather simple and
all-encompassing expectation of God (who, by the way -
sees and knows all...)

so...

after a boffo performance in Jericho, Joshua takes his show
on the road, and they prepare to go up against Ai

cf. - they are "feelin' it" ...

full of spit and vinegar...

"We can take this town. Save the reserves. Just send
a small crew..."

but -

they went into the battle with false assumptions

- they thought God was with them...

even tho' they had (by the choice... the acts... of one man)
turned their back on God

and so they got routed and chased away by a distinctly inferior force
this should have been easy...

but - choices matter

and Achan had made a choice that affected the whole people

i.e. - when God says something is devoted to destruction...

he means it should be destroyed

note - sometimes, this may seem like an arbitrary decision / demand
purely to serve as a test of obedience...

other times - it may be because God knows that what we might
cling to...

... is no good for us

i.e. - a simple example of a recovering alcoholic

some may be able to be with people who are drinking...
to keep Scotch in the house to offer to guests...

but many cannot

- what happens then... if they cling to a bottle they should not have?

our choices are important...

the actions that flow from those decisions make a difference.

as they did here...

as Joshua would impress upon us with his final charge
to the people he was leading...

II) The Time for Choosing

24.1 - Joshua assembled everyone - like a congregational meeting...

and they presented themselves before God

Joshua went over their recent history -

how God called them to be a people through Abraham...

how God had led them out of slavery in Egypt...

provided for them in the wilderness

and brought them to take possession of the promised land

now...

it's time for a choice...

- what sort of people... what sort of community...
would they be?

there is a foundational aspect to this choice:

"Choose this day whom you will serve..."

think on where you have come from...

think on where you are...

- it's not a tough choice...

(and yet...

many people struggle with it still...

and yet...

the Bible is filled with stories about how God's people
struggled with it for all their history...)

Choose this day...

(because it affects how we will live tomorrow...)

as it determines the foundation on which we stand

i.e. - there are as many different choices for the “building of our lives”

as the Israelites faced in their day:

- take on the beliefs and gods of the people around you...
 - find your security in what you build with your own hands...
- erect barns and warehouses to store you grain and other objects of wealth...

or -

build your life on the foundation of trusting in what God has done for you
and - all that he has promised

because this is a foundation that cannot be shaken...

this is a foundation that leads us to where we find our peace...

where we give form to our purpose...

relate re: a Cleveland, Ohio, mail carrier by the name of Bill Merriman.

He was featured several years ago in that city’s newspaper

because someone had noticed that Merriman did more than
simply bring the day’s mail.

He took the time to listen to people on his route...

and that led him to some consider how his personal faith
could play out where he was... where he worked...

He aided some recent immigrants in his delivery area in finding
English language tutors.

He referred battered women to places where they could find shelter.

Since several families on his route were Hispanic, he took the trouble to
learn Spanish.

He carried a list of social work agencies with him in case he needed to
refer someone.

After a letter carrier on a nearby route saved a toddler’s life, Merriman took a
course on CPR so he, too, would be prepared if a situation where
such help was needed ever arose.

One day, he found a business on his route that needed a secretary -
and around the corner, he found a woman who needed a job.

- he had made a choice...
 - to build his life on the right foundation...
 - and the results were life-affirming, and -
 - life-changing

Choose this day...

Achan chose selfishly... poorly...
and not only did he suffer, but all the people with him

Choose this day...

and then let it play out non ways that bring God's blessings
to bear in our world.