

**Grace, mercy and peace are yours through faith in our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>16</sup>Joshua got up early in the morning, and he had Israel come forward tribe by tribe. The tribe of Judah was identified. <sup>17</sup>Then he had the tribe of Judah come forward, and he identified the clan of the Zerahites. Next, he had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by individual families, and Zabdi's family was identified. <sup>18</sup>Then he had Zabdi's household come forward one man at a time, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was identified.

<sup>19</sup>Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory now to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give him praise. Now tell me what you did. Do not conceal it from me."

<sup>20</sup>Achan answered Joshua, "It is true. I am the one who has sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: <sup>21</sup>Among the plunder I saw an expensive Mesopotamian robe, a fine one, and two hundred shekels of silver and one wedge of gold—it weighed fifty shekels. I coveted them and I took them. Now they are hidden in the ground inside my tent, and the silver is underneath it."

<sup>22</sup>So Joshua sent agents. They ran to the tent, and there it was! The robe was hidden in his tent, and the silver was underneath it! <sup>23</sup>They took them from the middle of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel, where they poured them out before the LORD.

<sup>24</sup>Then Joshua took Achan son of Zerah and the silver, the garment, and the wedge of gold, as well as Achan's sons and his daughters, his ox, his donkey and his flock, and his tent and everything that belonged to him—so all Israel, led by Joshua, brought them up to the Valley of Achor.

<sup>25</sup>Joshua said, "Why have you brought disaster on us? The LORD will bring disaster on you this day!" Then all Israel stoned Achan to death. They also burned him and them with fire, and they pelted them with stones. <sup>26</sup>They erected a large heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from the heat of his anger. For that reason the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor to this day. **This is God's Word.**

**Dear Children of God,**

Do you like to talk about your sins? I think all of us would answer with a resounding NO. We don't want anyone to know what we have done wrong and we are not alone. When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God because they didn't want to be confronted by their sin. When Cain killed his brother Abel he tried to answer God's call to repentance by claiming he was not his brother's keeper. When King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and she became pregnant he tried to cover it up by arranging for her husband to be killed in battle. Throughout history people have tried to cover up or hide their sin and God has recorded some of these instances in scripture to help us see that we cannot hide our sins from God.

In our sermon text for today we have another example of someone trying to cover up their sin by burying the spoils of their sin in their tent. They knew what they had done was wrong but they just couldn't help themselves and somehow they figured they could hide what they had done. I think we all have had similar thoughts at one time or another but as we consider these words from Joshua it would be good to ask ourselves, **"What's Buried in Your Tent?"** As we ponder

this question, **“Let’s be Honest in Our Confession,”** and then, **“Let’s Trust that God Bore the Punishment for Our Sins.”**

I. God gave the Children of Israel specific instructions for the defeat of Jericho and part of the instructions included that the plunder from the city should be presented to the Lord – i.e. put into the temple treasury. The Lord also included the punishment for disobeying this command about the plunder. The Children of Israel followed God’s command and Jericho was defeated and destroyed and the Children of Israel rejoiced. God was with them and now they could move forward with conquering the other cities in Canaan and taking the land the Lord had promised them.

But there was a problem. They went out to defeat the city of Ai and instead of victory they themselves tasted defeat. This wasn’t the way it was supposed to be. What happened? Joshua went to the Lord in prayer and God told him that Israel had sinned. Someone had kept plunder from Jericho for themselves.

**“Joshua got up early in the morning, and he had Israel come forward tribe by tribe. The tribe of Judah was identified. <sup>17</sup>Then he had the tribe of Judah come forward, and he identified the clan of the Zerahites. Next, he had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by individual families, and Zabdi’s family was identified. <sup>18</sup>Then he had Zabdi’s household come forward one man at a time, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was identified.”** I wonder what was going through Achan’s mind as the tribe and then the clan and then the family and finally his name was called out. Do you think that he might have breathed a sigh of relief when his name was announced?

When Joshua said, **“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 did not hold back. He confessed all that he had done.

As you listen this morning, this is more than a Bible story. It begs the question for each one of us, **“What is buried in Your tent?”** Have you buried a guilty pleasure or secret addiction that you have kept hidden from those around you? Do you have unfaithful thoughts or words or actions when it comes to your marriage? When it comes to your job, do you give a full day’s work for a full days wage or have you found ways to steal or to cheat your employer out of time or materials? Are you living a lie at school or at church? We don’t want to ask ourselves, **“What’s buried under our tent?”** because we are afraid what it might reveal but we know that nothing can be hidden from God. Just as Joshua encouraged Achan so we are encouraged to confess our sins and to seek God’s forgiveness.

A number of years ago there was a program in Ohio that encouraged fugitives from justice to turn themselves into a local church. It did not offer amnesty but it did offer the fugitive a favorable consideration when it came to their case. Over 800 criminals surrendered to authorities. There was a similar program in Arizona where those who turned themselves in were assigned public defenders and there was help for the families and children involved. The underlying motivation for people to turn themselves in was that they were tired of running, tired of looking over their shoulders.

Each of us battles with temptation every day. God tells us “no.” We say “yes.” He tells us to stay away from something. We go directly toward that something. We want only what we want. We can get caught up in the pleasure of our sins but after awhile we get tired of carrying the guilt – we get tired of running. Today God offers us relief from our sins. He offers to remove the guilt. today it is time to confess our sins to the Lord and to look to him for forgiveness.

**II.** So what happened to Achan? He confessed his sin but the result wasn't what we might assume. **“Then all Israel stoned Achan to death. They also burned him and them with fire, and they pelted them with stones. <sup>26</sup>They erected a large heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from the heat of his anger. For that reason the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor to this day.”** The punishment was severe and yet God had warned his people as to the punishment for their sin even as he had warned Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, **“If you eat from this tree you will surely die,”** (Genesis 2:17) or as Paul warned in his letter to the Romans, **“The wages of sin is death,”** or as James tells us, **“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”** (James 2:10). Sometimes there are severe consequences to our sins but there is also forgiveness. That is what our Lenten season is all about – how Jesus journeyed to the cross to bring us forgiveness.

It was not an easy journey for him. In our Gospel lesson we heard about how Satan tempted him and yet in every case he resisted that temptation so that he could do the impossible – be perfect in our place. Satan tempted Jesus throughout his ministry and yet he never gave in and then Jesus went to the cross to be the perfect sacrifice for all the times we fall short of God's commands. Every day as we confess our sins, we can rest assured that they are forgiven that Christ has paid for them and that they have been cast away from us. We can move forward with our lives refreshed, renewed, and strengthened as we prepare to fight against temptation. And even if there are severe consequences because of our sins, the Lord is there to give us strength to move forward.

As we move forward may we work hard not to “bury our sins in our tent,” but let us regularly confess them to our Lord, look to him for forgiveness. But even better, may we rely on him to help us resist the temptations that come our way. Amen.