

Deliver Us From the Evil Within

Joshua 1:1-7:1; especially 1:9 and 7:20-21

Week of October 18

As you enter into prayer now, take a moment to settle your mind. Put aside your concerns and what needs to get done today, or what didn't get done today. Take a slow, deep breath. Center yourself in His Peace. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and End. You are found in Him.

Be Still.

Lord, open my heart and mind to hear and understand Your Word. I invite your Spirit to speak to me as I meditate on your Word.

We begin this series on evil in the midst of October. This morning I walked past ghouls and goblins and porches full of skeletons as I walked my dogs. The theatres are full of horror movies, and even the Food Network is full of creepy things—mummies made of cake! Not all of us love it, but many of us do. We like the idea that there is evil out there, that it is a concrete evil, and once we understand it or know its weakness, we will be able to cage it, destroy it, or get rid of it.

Maybe you can kill a vampire with a silver bullet. Zombies can be killed by destroying their brains. There's a formula. There's a way to solve the problem of the evil. Or maybe, there's a hero to deliver you from it.

In our new series, “Deliver Us From Evil” you’ll notice that there are heroes. Military leaders, judges that God sent to lead his people as they were surrounded by pagan kingdoms that threatened to put an end to the kingdom God was building through His people. Joshua is the first hero we’ll meet. It’s a dramatic story, and God delivers Jericho into the hands of the Israelites under Joshua’s leadership. But. Isn’t there always a But?

Of all the challenges that the Israelites face in these first seven chapters, the real problem will come from within. Isn’t that always how it is?

We pick up the Scripture reading in Joshua, chapter 7, verse 1:

But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, 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.

The Lord said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? 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. That is why the Israelites can’t 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. Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, "Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: that which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.

Pause and Pray.

Jesus, I am here because I want to experience You. As I meditate on this passage, draw to mind those things that You would have me become more aware of. Center my heart and mind on Yourself. Use your Word to draw my heart to You. Amen.

REFLECT.

God had given Israel the victory up until Ai. But at the battle of Ai they were defeated. Not because they were weaker or Ai was stronger, but because Achan, an Israelite, had disobeyed the orders. All the spoils of war were to either be destroyed because they were unclean or they were to be given to God. But Achan had kept some for himself. And the victories Israel was experiencing came to a screeching halt. They had been infiltrated—not by an outsider, but by an insider.

Israel had been ordered to eliminate these pagan kingdoms because of the danger of their idols and their ways. But they had missed their own idols.

Unfortunately, evil is not just out there. It's in here. Inside me. Inside you. Impossible to separate.

Recently at a staff meeting, we were reviewing a connection event. It had been a huge success, and we were thrilled with all the folks that were there—some that we hadn't seen for a long time, some that we had never even met! As we reviewed I reflected on some of my feelings about those that were there. Instead of being thrilled with folks who were coming back out, or coming out for the first time, I felt a sense of selfishness. Where had they been before? Why were they only coming now, now that we were throwing a party?

After confessing this horrible attitude to my coworkers, it haunted me for another day. I kept reflecting on it. What kind of missions pastor gets upset when people do finally come to an event? Satan used it to beat me up for another day or so.

Shortly after I was reminded that I had forgotten Jesus. Not once, but twice. First, when I was greedy about the event, thinking it was mine, when it was really His. Then again, after I felt convicted of my selfishness, I forgot that He was standing there next to me, ready to forgive me and move on.

Achan forgot too. Forgot that it all belongs to God. Evil was alive and well inside of Achan, an Israelite. Evil is alive and well inside of me.

PAUSE, PRAY AND ASK.

God, how have I forgotten You in the past few days? PAUSE.

Is there an area of my life where I am denying You what is rightfully yours? PAUSE.

Is there an area of my life where I have allowed selfishness to prevail? PAUSE.

Am I facing evil and forgetting that despite what I face, You remain right beside me, ready to help me or ready to forgive me? PAUSE.

God, I confess these things before You now. I ask that You would in your infinite mercy forgive me again. I ask You to make me faithful to turn to You often, and to turn to You quickly. PAUSE.

YIELD.

I return now to the text:

But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, 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.

The Lord said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? 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. That is why the Israelites can't 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. Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, "Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: that which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

Today we close with the Lord's prayer, asking for God's mercy, and that He would deliver us from evil. The evil that is in this world, and the evil that is within us. His Spirit can save us from both.

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom
And the glory
Forever and ever
Amen.