I. INTRODUCTION

A. OPENING ILLUSTRATION

1. September 1862 - American Civil War - Union General George McClellan
2. Had an extraordinary opportunity - chasing General Robert E. Lee
3. Two Union Soldiers from the 27th Indiana Infantry discovered an envelope containing three cigars wrapped in a piece of paper. . . Lee's strategy.
4. McClellan knew exactly where Lee's men were and how to attack.
5. But Lee was a Giant in his mind, so he attacked timidly.
6. In one battle, he held substantial forces in reserve; he failed to pursue Lee's retreating army.
7. A potentially decisive victory slipped away.
8. Historians debate this impact on the war, but his fear became one of the biggest pieces of commentary.
9. Here's what's fascinating
   a) McClellan wasn't simply responding to the army standing in front of him. He was responding to the army he feared was standing in front of him.
   b) That fear informed his decision-making on the battlefield.
   c) Because what we fear too often impacts our choices.

B. THEME

1. **Today I want to talk about how what we fear shapes who we become**

C. PRAYER

1. Father of Glory, forgive our fears that strip us of our identity, take us off mission, and lead to sinning against you. We are finite, and you are infinite. Our eyes see what you reveal, but our minds ruminate and imagine, creating mental fences that restrict our obedience, veil reality, and redirect our will. Today I pray we learn to fear the Lord. A fear not settled on your might but unsettled in your majesty.

D. THE STORY FOR TODAY

1. They were still encamped around Sinai... head out into the wilderness.
2. God takes them directly to the promised Land... tests their fears.

E. **TRANSITION** In our story today, we will see them miss an opportunity to rediscover the Eden blessing, Cower from the Giants from Genesis 6, and ignore the Lord. All of this stems from fear.

II. REDISCOVERING EDEN

A. TEXT -

1. **READ Numbers13:17-21**
   a) This mission - go and SEE its quality and discern if it is good or bad
   b) Word for bad here shares the root with Evil...
   c) Sound familiar?
2. **READ Genesis 3:6-7** - what's the name of the tree?

B. INTERPRETATION

1. Call back to Genesis 3
   a) A Literary Pattern - See, discern, obey.
2. The text takes us back to Eden
   a) If they choose Godly wisdom, they receive the blessing - fruitfulness, rest in the land.
   b) If they choose human wisdom, they receive exile and death.
3. It foreshadows what is about to happen because of this pattern
   a) God isn't asking them to turn their brains off. He's asking them to trust him. - Evaluate the land, not evaluate God's trustworthiness.
   b) This is all rhetoric to prepare us as readers for what is about to happen.
   c) Eve's evaluation led her to take what God had prohibited
   d) Israel's evaluation will lead them to reject what God has promised.

C. APPLICATION

1. Human Wisdom is often driven more by what we fear
   a) Numbers 13 reveals human wisdom is driven by fear.
   b) Fight or Flight
      (1) Define it
      (2) Israel is in flight mode.
      (3) Anxiety compels us to rush ahead or turn away from G's blessing.
   c) What anxious thoughts cause you to turn away from God's blessing?

2. When we use our wisdom, we sell short what God has in store for us
   a) Do you fear failure?
   b) Do you fear your doubts? Faith?
   c) Do you fear being wrong?
   d) Do you fear losing control?
   e) Do you fear hard work?
   f) All of these fears turn away from God's blessings.
   g) But this story reveals something else too.

3. When we use our wisdom, we sell short what God has in store for us.
   a) Careful application of the point - not health and wealth.
      (1) Following God does not = health, wealth, or success.
      (2) That's the social gospel, and it twists God's blessings.
   b) What I am saying is that God has a plan for his church, and you play a part in that plan.
      (1) Our favorite characters from Scripture were all courageous men and women who, despite their fears, were faithful to God.
      (2) They moved forward despite their great fears.
      (3) Consider Gideon - when God found him, he was hiding in a winepress, but God called him to be a brave warrior, and he did.

D. TAKEAWAY

1. Fear CRIPPLES our PARTICIPATION in God's MISSION

E. TRANSITION

1. So when the Israelites toured Canaan, they discovered things that frightened them. But what specifically are we talking about here? Let's talk about their fear of Giants.

III. FEARING GIANTS

A. TEXT

1. **Read Numbers 13:22-25**
2. The Report
   a) The Land - Flowing with milk and Honey (Goats and Dates)
   b) The Giants - Sons of Anak - Deut. 2 calls them long-necked.
   c) The Responses - Caleb and Joshua say, Let's go. the 10 say, Whoa... "
   READ Numbers 13:32-33

B. INTERPRETATION

1. Two things about the story here
   a) **First, who and what are the descendants of Anak?**
      (1) Tempting to get sidetracked here, but we have to address this.
      (2) Scholars are divided. Here is what I see.
         (a) Sons of Anak = Nephilim
         (b) Spiritual beings who rebelled against God. Had cross-breed relationships with human women. Produced Giants.
         (c) Genesis 6:4
         (d) As the story unfolds, the vocabulary expands.
         (e) Rephaim (long necks) - Sons of Anak - descendants of Rapha.
         (f) Three of them are named here.
         (g) 2 Samuel 21:18-22 show that four were living in David's time.
         (h) Giants are an ongoing problem that instills fear in the Israelites until David.

   b) **Second, what's at stake here is more than just land; it's their identity**
      (1) At Sinai, God said You are my treasured possession, a holy nation
         (a) But now they are letting the world around them shape what they believe about themselves.
         (b) God already told Israel who they were. But when they encounter Giants, they allow their enemies to redefine them.
      (2) Their statement has two problems
         (a) They see themselves as grasshoppers - fear has diminished their view
         (b) Second, they assume the inhabitants see them the same way.

2. The Story Continues
   a) The reports create a frenzy, and the ten, to thwart the proclamation of Caleb,

b) At least two ways this intersects with our lives today...

C. APPLICATION

1. Fear is contagious
   a) Notice how quickly fear spreads through Israel.
   b) By Numbers 14:1-4, the whole camp has turned on Joshua and Caleb
   c) Fear has a way of spreading from one to the next like COVID
   d) Fear doesn't have to convince everyone that God is powerless. It only has to convince enough people that obedience is too risky.
   e) We need to be careful about whose fears we allow to shape our understanding of God's mission. And equally careful about how our own fears influence others.
   f) Parents, passing on fears to your children.

2. Fear can be rebellion
   a) Being afraid isn't necessarily sinful - fear is a natural response to danger, uncertainty, and things beyond our control.
   b) Fear leads the Israelites to question God's goodness, reject his promises, and eventually propose returning again to Egypt.
   c) Sometimes we disguise our fear as wisdom and call it cautiousness.
      (1) Realistic, practical.
      (2) We might be afraid of rejection, so we refuse to share our faith
      (3) Afraid of financial insecurity, so we resist generosity
      (4) Afraid of discomfort, so we avoid serving someone who is needy
   d) Fear becomes rebellion when we allow what frightens us to determine whether we will obey God.
   e) The question isn't whether we experience fear. It's whether our fear has become more influential in our decisions than our trust in God.

D. TAKEAWAY

1. **Fear CORRUPTS our IDENTITY**
2. Fear is not inherently sinful. But allowing fear to become the authority that governs our obedience can lead us into sin.

E. TRANSITION

1. Fear can eventually lead you to compromise on your convictions or principles because you get a bad case of FOMO. The fear of missing out.

IV. FEAR OF MISSING OUT

A. ILLUSTRATION

1. Maybe you've experienced FOMO
2. That fear is now convincing you to do something you previously decided wasn't worth doing.
3. I can tell you I get this every September when the new iPhones come out.
4. This is exactly what happens to the Israelites. They get a bad case of FOMO, and it leads them to compromise their beliefs, principles, and values again.

B. TEXT

1. The Setup - **READ NUMBERS 14:11-12**
2. We've seen this story before.
3. Moses quotes God back to himself. Gracious, slow to anger, Loyal love
4. The Punishment
   a) Plague kills the people who rebelled, including the 10 spies.
   b) A bigger punishment is Exile in the wilderness for 40 years.
   c) But when God leads them away, people panic; fearing they will miss out on this Eden blessing, they try to take the land on their own...
5. The Response - **READ NUMBERS 14:40-45**

C. INTERPRETATION

1. They try to take the blessing themselves.
   a) At first, God says go; the people say no
      (1) After the punishment
   b) God says no, but the people say go.
2. The Reversal is astounding and reveals the deeper problem. They are formed by what they fear rather than by God.
   a) Irony is that the same fear that initially kept Israel from moving into the promised land now drives them to try to take it without God.

D. APPLICATION

1. Fear can lead to missed opportunities
   a) Fear what could go wrong
2. Fear can lead to regret but keep us from repentance -
   a) We can regret what fear has cost us without ever surrendering the fear that controls us
3. Fear can lead to desperation
   a) So afraid of missing out, they rush into battle without God.

E. TAKEAWAY

1. **Fear COMPELS us to go, ROGUE**

F. TRANSITION

1. But the message of this sermon shouldn't be that it's all on us to overcome our fears so we don't receive the curse the Israelites face. That's not where this story is pointing. That's not how this story ends.
2. We come to the theological center of this story in Numbers 14:9. Turn with me there, and we will go home on this verse.
3. Here we go; are you ready?

V. CLOSING

A. LANDING - READ NUMBERS 14:9

B. GOSPEL CONNECTION

1. Here is the good news in this story
2. Israelites missed out on PL because of their fears...
3. Centuries later, another Israelite entered the wilderness, tested, passed
4. What was his name? Jesus
   a) Where Israel questioned God's goodness, Jesus trusted his Father
   b) Where Israel allowed fear to determine their choices, Jesus submitted to his Father's will.
   c) In the garden, he prayed, not my will, but thine be done.
   d) And that obedience ultimately led him to the cross.
   e) Jesus didn't avoid suffering; he faithfully followed his Father
   f) And his faithfulness leads to an even greater promised land.
   g) The same God who punishes Israel never abandons them. God was present in the pillar of fire and the cloud of smoke. He led them faithfully.

C. The GOD WHO WENT BEFORE ISRAEL NOW DWELLS WITHIN US

1. Fear the Lord. Trust his presence. Follow his Spirit
2. Those with the Spirit in them walk in step with him.
3. Be formed by the God who goes before us and now dwells within us.
4. And if you are going to be shaped by what you fear, fear the Lord because it is the beginning of wisdom.
5. Here's the punchline.
6. **Fear the God within you, not the world Beyond you.**

D. PRAYER

1. Heavenly Father, we are trying to follow you today. We think sometimes it would be easier to follow you if you went before us like the pillar of fire and smoke but the Israelites didn't do so well at it. So I thank you for the Spirit within us who continues to remind us of what your son has taught us. Make us a people who love you with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. And let us love others the way you love others. I ask for the strength to be your witnesses. Let us show the world to not be afraid of what this world is, but to faithfully follow you. Amen.

Pay attention to the bulletin about Operation Christmas Child.

Fall Fellowship Meal - Sunday, November 15. Meal provided (chicken & noodles, mashed potatoes, green beans, salad) but we ask that you please bring a dessert to share. (please cut your dessert).

Women's Ministry Treat Swap - Sunday, November 22 after service in the family life center. All ladies are invited! Bring at least 2 dozen of your favorite treat and a container to transport your desserts home. Lunch will be provided. Please sign up if you plan to attend.

Welcome Tabitha, it's her first day on staff today!