

FIRST FRUITS

Opening: *Inn of St. George and the Dragon*

Text: **Joshua 6: 15-19, 7:1**

Our study of the life of Joshua takes us to a city/state called Ai. Joshua and the nation of Israel is on a quest to take possession of the land God had promised them.

Ai wasn't far from Jericho. It wasn't significant but it was strategic, located at the top a mountain plateau providing a panoramic view of all the surrounding nations and cities.

Ai is the second city Joshua will go up against and in comparison ... it should have been, *a piece of cake*, but it didn't turn out that way.

Joshua 6:1 God tells Joshua - Look sharp now I've already given Jericho to you along with its king, its crack troops and then God tells Joshua exactly what to do ... Mike's inspired message last week

It all seemed to go well – walls collapse – complete and utter victory

But there was a serious problem

☆ Israel's army failed to obey God's directions and commands (the mistake didn't show up until Ai)

The **War of 1898** – called the Spanish American War (this is the war that gave birth to the term yellow journalism)

First fighting was the Naval Battle of Manila –

1. U. S. Navy took on an aging outdated out gunned Spanish fleet
2. Seven hours later entire Spanish fleet was destroyed with virtually no American casualties
3. Commodore Dewey wrote – the only medical assistance needed was cough drops from cheers of victory

Israel's battle with Ai should have produced similar results - But instead their army was routed - 36 Israeli casualties

To understand what happened at Ai we have to go back to Jericho.

Joshua 6: 1, 2 MSG

¹Jericho was shut up tight as a drum because of the People of Israel: no one going in, no one coming out.

²God spoke to Joshua, “Look sharp now. I’ve already given Jericho to you, along with its king and its crack troops. Here’s what you are to do”

God not only told Joshua what to do he guaranteed the victory

Joshua even had a face to face encounter with the Captain of the Hosts of the Armies of God,

Take off his shoes - you’re standing on Holy Ground, Joshua fell on his face and worshiped him.

That title is reserved for the person of Jesus, **the Everlasting God, the Great I Am**

It was all going Joshua’s way just as God had promised

And yet the attack on Ai was a short term disaster that could have been a complete disaster

Look back at God’s last minute memo to the army of Israel

[Joshua 6: 15-19](#)

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ When the seventh day came, they got up early and marched around the city this same way but seven times—yes, this day they circled the city seven times. On the seventh time around the priests blew the trumpets and Joshua signaled the people, “Shout!—God has given you the city! **The city and everything in it is under a holy curse and offered up to God.**

“Except for Rahab the harlot—she is to live, she and everyone in her house with her, because she hid the agents we sent.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ “As for you, watch yourselves in the city under holy curse. Be careful that you don’t covet anything in it and take something that’s cursed, endangering the camp of Israel with the curse and making trouble for everyone. All silver and gold, all vessels of bronze and iron are **holy** to God. **Put them in God’s treasury.**”

One soldier violated God explicit instructions: his name was Achan

Sometimes we ask ... what difference can one life make? In this case Achan’s choice negatively impacted the entire nation.

GOD’S DOUBLE WARNING!

6:19 Be careful that you don’t covet anything in it and take something that’s cursed, endangering the camp of Israel with the curse and making trouble for everyone. All silver and gold, all vessels of bronze and iron are holy to God. Put them in God’s treasury.”

It’s Curious isn’t it? – The terms **cursed** and **holy** are used interchangeably for the same objects

Which begs the question ... What does the word Holy mean?

Definition: dedicated to God – to separate – to set aside – to sanctify

As a kid I loved– swashbuckling (sword play) movies

Ok – I still do

I even joined a fencing club in as a freshman in college

The *Three musketeers* – *Robin Hood* - *The Scarlet Pirate* - *The Mark of Zorro* were favorite movies

My favorite pirate movie is: *Pirates of the Caribbean – The Curse of the Black Pearl*

Captain Barbossa and crew plunder a chest of Aztec gold that had been cursed – resulting in the crew losing the ability to taste, feel, enjoy anything - they were alive on the outside but dead on the inside.

They knew of the curse but took the gold anyway



It's fascinating what happens when you mention the word **treasure** to someone

Did you know people are still searching for Captain Kid's treasure that's believed to be buried somewhere on Long Island.

Joe Carrera's brush with the surf and sword & treasure – there one minute – submerged beneath the breakers never to be seen again -

When I shared that story with my history classes their eyes got as big as yours are right this moment.



News article this week about the recovered treasure from a ship that went down in a hurricane off coast of South Carolina in 1857 – 150 years ago (history buffs 3 years before the Civil War)

Freshly minted Confederate gold coins, 31 hundred of them also 45 gold bars and 80 pounds of gold dust recovered from the wreckage of the *SS Central America*

According to the *AP* -The gold is for sale and just one tiny coin alone sell for 1 million dollars.

The temptation of sudden wealth can do terrible things to a person and Achan got caught up in it

It's also explains why God was so emphatic in warning them don't fall into the trap of coveting what God said to set aside for Him (His storehouse or the tabernacle)

We too can turn what God has planned to be a blessing into a curse

Achan's choice had tragic consequences – going against God's command and instructions always does

Ask Adam or Eve

Joshua 7:1-5 MSG

Then the People of Israel violated the holy curse. Achan ... of the tribe of Judah, took some of the cursed things. GOD became angry with the People of Israel.

Joshua doesn't yet know of Achan's actions when he sends spies to check out Ai

² Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai (The Ruin), which is near Beth Aven just east of Bethel. He instructed them, "Go up and spy out the land." The men went up and spied out Ai.

³ They returned to Joshua and reported, "Don't bother sending a lot of people—two or three thousand men are enough to defeat Ai. Don't wear out the whole army; there aren't that many people there."

⁴⁻⁵ So three thousand men went up—and then fled in defeat before the men of Ai! The men of Ai killed thirty-six—chased them from the city gate as far as The Quarries, killing them at the descent. The heart of the people sank, all spirit knocked out of them.

Did you notice what Joshua failed to do here?

- No prayer
- no seeking for Spiritual guidance
- Spies report : Hey man no need to take the whole army, *this is a walk in the park*

If they hadn't been so overconfident and consulted God, do you think things might have turned out different? I have no doubt they would have.

Achan fell victim of greed – he was consumed and it cost him everything –

But what if Joshua had consulted God first? Those 36 soldiers wouldn't have died maybe things might have been different for Achan

How do I know that? [Joshua 1:8](#) God's personal word to Joshua

⁸ Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

Guilty Party searched out

Joshua is up at the crack of dawn and following God's instructions to find the guilty party - Achan is finally singled out

7:20-21

²⁰Achan confesses "It's true. I sinned against GOD, the God of Israel. This is how I did it. In the plunder I spotted a beautiful Shinar robe, two hundred shekels of silver, and a fifty-shekel bar of gold, and I coveted and took them. They are buried in my tent with the silver at the bottom."

²⁵⁻²⁶ Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? GOD will now trouble you. Today!" And all Israel stoned him—burned him with fire and stoned him with stones. They piled a huge pile of stones over him. It's still there. Only then did GOD turn from his hot anger. That's how the place came to be called Trouble Valley right up to the present time.

Why was the punishment so harsh?

Achan had not only stolen from God he turned what was ment to be Holy and a blessing for all into something cursed by his actions ... but there's more

Jericho was the first city taken

- God Had instituted principles and festivals: One is called First Fruits.
- The people were always supposed to give God the first part of their harvest.

The Feast of First Fruits took place during the weeklong celebration of Passover

It marked thanksgiving to God for the first fruits of the grain and cereal harvested in spring

The people were not allowed to eat anything from the crop until they had given the very first portion to the Lord

This required faith because it early harvest – the only part ready for eating They had to trust God to provide rain and good weather for a full harvest to feed their families.

Jericho was the first battle just like the first harvest

That's why putting the precious metals and iron into the Tabernacle made them Holy instead of cursed!

First Fruits festival was an Old Testament model that pointed to Jesus - Jesus is the first fruits of the Resurrection

[1Corinthians 15:23](#) But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

Did you know that God still requires us to honor Him with first fruits thanksgiving?

[Malachi 3:10, 11 \(NLT\)](#)

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!

If you're unfamiliar with term **tithe**, it's means a tenth or 10%

The examples in scripture are abundant and not just in the Old Testament

Jesus spoke frequently about money:

- One-sixth of the Gospels deal with how we are to use our money
- One third of the parables Jesus taught address the subject of stewardship
- Jesus dealt with money matters, because money matters!

The Bible makes it clear God is our provider: Everything we have belongs to Him not to us

If we understand about this principle – we understand what stewardship means

We don't give God 10% of everything we make – We give Him back 10% of what already belongs to Him.

Tithing, is First Fruits giving – It requires an act of faith and obedience

If we give God all of our lives but hold back our fiancés, we rob ourselves and family of blessings.

1. If you haven't been tithing because you didn't know – Now you do
2. If you haven't been tithing because you think you just don't have the extra money

Listen to this verse in [Malachi again](#)

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. **If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven ... pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!**

This walk with God is a spiritual walk of faith, we choose to trust Him or we don't – We choose to obey Him or we don't.

God doesn't need your money – but He wants your heart and obedience

I can tell you that it's impossible to out give God– He'll send down blessing upon blessing if you do.

Make a heart commitment to try it for a month – take a step of faith and watch God honor His word.

Let's pray