

WELCOME 1 July 2018 – 6 Pentecost '18 B

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you all here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea...you know that's going to be awesome.

On October 6, 2002, Tullio Lombardo's marble statue Adam fell from its display stand at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City & broke into 28 large pieces & 100s of smaller fragments. 1st thought: Vandalism, but curators determined the life-sized Renaissance sculpture toppled of its own accord...An unseen internal weakness in the display stand just gave way... Eventually the statue was repaired & restored to its rightful place. But the next issue of Time magazine had a short piece titled "*Adam Has Fallen Again.*"

An unseen internal weakness that caused a fall & the resulting brokenness that destroyed what had been painstakingly handcrafted...That sounds familiar...

The Bible calls that sin...an unseen internal flaw that afflicts all of us & makes us self-invested & self-centered & self-interested above all things...& causes us to turn away from God. We are sinners. We're all guilty. We've fallen/broken...It began with Adam/Eve, but didn't stop there. Have you ever wondered why? Why the rich executive w/ everything pulls a crooked deal for more? Why the woman with a great husband & kids throws it all away on an affair? Why the bright student cheats on an exam or the good kid gets arrested selling ICE or a trusted friend betrays you? Nation/tribe rises up against a perceived enemy?

What do you do when...you lose your temper?...say something you shouldn't have? ...filled with jealousy or drawn to pornography even though you don't want to be? When your faith is faltering/obedience failing...turned away with no regard for God?

God's faithfulness/trustworthiness hasn't faltered or waived a bit. Higher than the heavens is his love for you. Stronger than death is his desire to have you as part of his family & heir of his kingdom. Farther than east from west he wants you to be separated from your sin so that you can live fully & abundantly in the joy of his forgiveness. When you sin...God comes with his love & his Son to restore you to the fullness of life & your rightful place as God's beloved child. It took 12 years to fix that statue...you & I are restored already...

We'll explore & experience that today...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God, you know our hearts. You have knitted our inmost being and you know our deepest desires, fears and worries. Draw us close to you...into a new awareness of your presence in our lives & your deep love for each of us. Save us from our own failing & falling, so that we may more freely follow you & work for the good of those around us & your harvest in this world...through Jesus we pray...Amen

6 PENTECOST '18 B – COURAGEOUS FAITH: WHEN YOU SIN

JOSHUA 7:1-8:2

Christmas holidays 1983...last year of uni...about to head to Seminary & the campus ministry I was part of took a group of high school students to a camp outside of Orlando, FL...A week of gospel presentations, personal witness & FUN...including 2 days at DisneyWorld & the nearly new Epcot Center. I was showing off...I know hard to believe...there was an awesome fountain I had never seen before (leapfrog fountain) – shoots a tube of water through the air...I was rapt & wondered what a great photo if I could get my head in front of one of those tubes flying through the air & catch it right on my forehead. 1st try missed & knocked my hat off...2nd effort skimmed my ear...3rd attempt hit right between my eyes...and for a minute I thought I had blown both eyeballs right out of their sockets. I had no idea how much force was behind that little tube of water. I had no idea how much it was going to hurt...how long my eyes would be bloodshot...unable to focus clearly. Of course I could've blinded myself! I know that now. One of many events, & I'm sure you're thinking through your catalogue, that had the potential of being life-changing. So given that...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Please share a “fork in the road” event? decision, occurrence, moment in time...everything changed
2. The belief that “my ‘sin’ only affects me” is a lie. Can you name examples where one person’s sin/failure impacts others around then?

BIBLES

Last week I mentioned in passing that many of us are 1 “thing” away from changing our lives forever. One financial overreach, one physical injury, one serious illness, one driving mistake, one dangerous relationship...I contend that every single one of us is one bad decision away from changing the entire course of our life. Let's name names:

Smith/Bancroft/Warner, Lance Armstrong, Barnaby Joyce...you know exactly. *

At this point in the unfolding story of God's people, Joshua is leading as they conquer the land God has promised them. They have won their 1st major victory...marching around the city of Jericho for 7 days & on the last day blowing trumpets & shouting as God crushes the walls before them & they attack to take the city. There were 3 specific commands in carrying out that victory...1. kill every living thing, destroy the city & everything in it...2. rescue Rahab & her family... & 3. bring all the precious stuff in to the treasury...*Joshua 6:17-19 – “Jericho & everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute & the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies. Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, & you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the Lord & must be brought into his treasury.”*

Now look how chapter 7 begins...*But Israel (violated the instructions) [broke faith] about the things set apart for the Lord. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the Lord was very angry with the Israelites.* Rewind for a sec God has held back the flooding Jordan River like a wall & they cross over on the dry rocky riverbed **AND** God has flattened the walls of Jericho handing them a gigantic military triumph as a down payment on the rest of the conquest. God is keeping his promise but Israel *broke faith* because this one guy couldn't keep his mitts off the stuff that was devoted to God either for destruction or for the treasury.

Look...I know...nobody wakes up in the morning & says, “Hmmm...what can I do today to spit in God's eye? What can I do today to just give the old fella upstairs a good kick in the labanza?” Nobody starts their day like that. But I also know that sin always starts in the small compromises...Before we break a command/ment we break the relationship/faith...Sin always begins w/ me deciding: I'm in charge. This is my life. My body. My \$\$\$\$. My ____ & no one gets to decide but me. When I start thinking like that, guess who's the Lord of my life...me. At that moment I have broken faith because at that moment I made me king of my universe...As the story unfolds, you & I now know something only one other person knows: Achan. *others will soon find out!*

Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. When they returned, they told Joshua, “There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don't make all our people struggle to go up there.”

The scouting report on Jericho included 2 rings of walls...massive defenses...great armaments...**BUT BEFORE GOD** it fell like a house of cards. So...with that momentum the spies come back & say, “Send the B grade...they'll take Ai with their eyes closed.” But they get their heads handed to them & now panic sets in. Despair grips the people of God. Complacent + Overconfident = Defeat. Even Joshua sends the troops in out w/ a prayer...literally...does not go to God before he goes to war. 7:1 *But Israel broke faith...* Achan stole some goodies, but he is not alone in his sin...what he does is infectious through the whole people...“my sin/life/ ____ only affects me” is bunk.

Keep going...so now Joshua prays, but God is so ticked he doesn't want to hear it... 2x God says “*Get up!*” God knows & tells Joshua exactly what has taken place & now all that's left is to expose the guilty party...AND 2x God diagnoses the real issue, “*broken my covenant.*” [vss 11 & 15] Sin always starts in the small compromises. Before we break a command/ment we break the relationship/faith...Sin always begins w/ me deciding: I'm in charge. Luther would say that

sin is always a 1st commandment issue – a question of whom you call Lord of your life – whom you worship/give your highest devotion/allegiance/obedience.

When the spotlight finally falls on Achan...you can hear the sadness & compassion in Joshua: *“My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession & tell me what you have done. Don't hide it from me.”* To Achan's credit, now that he can't hide/excuse/blame, he comes clean: *“I saw...I wanted...I took...I hid...”* Well...of course...Isn't that the path of every sin? I saw – wanted – took – hid.

Here's the thing...Achan saw the same things every other soldier saw when the walls fell & they attacked. He saw plunder ripe for taking...except he'd been commanded to not take it. So what he saw was stuff he wanted because...he wanted it. What Achan saw struck him as being something that would satisfy a desire...fill a void... maybe give him a leg up on his new life in this new land. Achan bought the lie *“If I get those things it'll be ok.”* He believed the lie *“If I get a little more than the other guys, I'll be happy.”* Anybody else bought into a lie like that at some point in life? *“Why would God say “No” to that? He's holding out on me. God doesn't want me to have any fun.”* That is THE LIE isn't it...*I'm sure I know better than God.* Adam & Eve surrounded by a garden that is all theirs save 1 tree...& the Tempter saying, *“Wow! Check out that tree! You know God's not giving you the whole story on that tree.”* Beautiful to look at. Good to eat. Provide something I want...I saw I wanted I took I hid.

Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us & drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. When sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death Jas 1:14-15. Rebellion against God always leads to some sort of ruin in our lives. Rebellion/sin/autonomy/independence severs the blessing of intimacy with The Father. You can hear it here: *I will not remain with you any longer unless you destroy the things among you that were set apart for destruction.* God is saying, you can't enjoy the fullness of my blessing & fullness of joy in my presence when your hearts are full of your own glory, magnificence...You can't cling to God when your hands are full of other things... *Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies. Jonah 2:8*

Jn 10:10 -“The thief comes only to steal, kill & destroy. (intimacy with the Father – joy in God's presence – peace in every circumstance – power over every enemy) I came that they may have life & have it abundantly.” Achan buys 2 lies...we all do...Lie #1 – It only affects me – my sin is nobody else's business – what I do doesn't hurt you – drinking/temper/stubbornness/porn/\$\$ - Lie #2 – Not that big a deal – trivialize/generalize/universalize/rationalize...Jesus declares he came to tear down those lies & the barrier they erect between us & God & us & the people around us.

A few real world right now examples...Royal Commission on Abuse...over & over again what we see is that those who should have confronted sin vigorously sinned by making light of it ignoring it handballing perpetrators to someone else...Royal Commission on Banking... the exact same thing...those who could have should have plotted a better course...didn't & put profits ahead of everything else & made it worse...DreamWorld...it really looks like folks who had the power & authority to keep folks safe instead used their power to keep running guests through a dangerous ride & now 4 families & dozens of others are forever scarred.

So what happens? *Joshua said to Achan, “Why have you brought trouble on us? The Lord will now bring trouble on you.” And all the Israelites stoned Achan & his family & burned their bodies. They piled a great heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day.* Really?!?!? That's harsh. Rebellion against God always leads to some sort of ruin in our lives...And it always affects more than just us...always. It affects all of us. We can't hide from it. We can look around & think, *“They're worse than me. Thank God, I'm not her/him”*...but we're just kidding ourselves because this is the boat we're all in. God doesn't wink at sin; He doesn't turn his head from it. He wipes it out...He does not leave sin unpunished. Genuine truth. That's why the sacrifice of his Son was absolutely necessary.

Last thing *Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take all your fighting men & attack Ai, for I have given you the king of Ai, his people, his town, & his land. You will destroy them as you destroyed Jericho & its king. But this time you may keep the plunder & the livestock for yourselves.* God always restores his people to their appointed mission & adds to the blessings. What Achan forfeited because he tried to take it for himself; the rest enjoy...

The account of Achan is a picture of what we rightfully deserve, but Jesus is the grace in which we now stand - the mercy from God that is ours.

Rom 5:8 - But God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

Titus 2:14 - He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, & to make us his very own people...

2 Cor 5:21 - God made Christ, who never sinned, to be our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Col 2:13-14 - You were dead because of your sins & because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us & took it away by nailing it to the cross.

The truth & the promise & the hope for us: Christ has taken our punishment & in return has granted us his life in the joy & love & presence of the Father. *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. – Eph 1:3*

When you sin...God comes with his love & his Son to restore you to the fullness of life & your rightful place as God's beloved child. It took 12 years to fix that old statue...you & I are restored already...

Let's pray: Search us, O God, and know our heart;
 Try us, and know our anxious thoughts;
 Look to discover if there is any wicked way in us,
 And lead us in the way everlasting.

Holy God, we know deep in our hearts we are not yet like Your Son. We know, there is a seemingly infinite way to go. But we trust You, O God, for You are faithful to complete your work in us.

So search our hearts as only you can. Shape us as only you know. Imprint your love in our hearts, that we might love You, that we might love our neighbor, and that only your love would keep our feet forever on Your path. Father, we pray that you be about the business of our hearts, and make us like Your Son. All these things in Christ's holy name we pray...Amen.