

I. Introduction

- A. We're starting today's message with an opinion survey. I'm going to show you some artwork by famous artists. You're going to say if you love it, like it, or don't like it. You will do that by your applause. And I'd like all our venues to participate! So, Weaverville let me hear you!
 - 1. Mona Lisa, Monet, Abstract, Frederic Remington, Simpsons
- B. So we look at art, and we form opinions. We love it, like it, or don't like it. You might even hate it, but I didn't want us to go there.
- C. The reason you love it, like it, or don't like it is simple. You have standards. You have artistic standards. You have moral standards. You have relational standards. You have all kinds of standards.
- D. Your standards help you draw a dividing line between what you like and don't like. They also help you draw that dividing line between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, right and wrong.
- E. It's like you draw a line, and artwork and food and pizza and things and people rise above the line—they meet your standards. Or they don't rise above the line; they fail to meet your standards.
- F. You make these calls a thousand times a day. And we call this process "judgment;" every one of us makes judgment calls all day long, you can't not judge because you have standards.
- G. And God has standards, too.
- H. Which can make things hairy for us, because what if God has standards for you and me? And what if we fall below the line?

II. God's Standards Too

- A. This is message 15 in our series called Birthright. We're studying the book of Joshua. God's people run a clinic on how to lay hold of all the treasures God has given us. They also run a clinic on how to blow it.
- B. Today, we'll look at the last part of Joshua 7. The topic is Judgment Day. I know we had a similar topic last week—we talked about what happens when God gets in your face and today, the ultimate answer to that question—Judgment day.
- C. Here a man receives the consequences for his sin. Judgment Day has come.
- D. It's hard to talk about Judgment Day in today's culture. It's not popular. It's not a feel-good topic.
- E. If it helps you, look at it this way. The only way to erase Judgment Day is to erase God's standards. And what kind of universe would it be if God had no standards?
- F. By the way, God knows that you are here today—perhaps for the first time in a long time, or even for the first time ever. And now, you are treated to a sermon on Judgment Day. You should know that, in our church, we emphasize the grace of God. The love of God.
- G. But here we are on this day, studying this part of the Bible, which emphasizes the Judgment of God. God's timing is perfect; and it is no accident that you are here now. Won't you open your heart to five truths about Judgment day from Joshua 7:10-26?

III. Five Truths

- A. The core of judgment: a broken covenant. Vv. 10-13.
 - 1. *10 So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? 11 Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff" (Joshua 7:10, 11, NKJV).*
 - 2. For the first time in ten long verses, God's people discover the reason for God's displeasure. They finally know what we readers have known since verse one: there is sin in the camp, and God is angry. That's why the Jews lost the battle for Ai. That's why thirty-six soldiers died. God had withdrawn His blessing.
 - 3. Now, God says, Get up! Israel has sinned. Then God specifies the charges against them. I want us to focus on the first one.
 - 4. God says, "They have transgressed my covenant" (v.11).
 - 5. This is the heart and soul of all our sins against God. God is not simply angry as a righteous judge; He is also angry as a cheated-on husband.
 - 6. Notice also the word "transgressed" (or "violated"). It is the same Hebrew verb used for crossing over the Jordan River in verse 7. This word means to cross a boundary.
 - 7. And that's what Israel has done; they have violated the boundaries of their covenant relationship with God.
 - 8. What does all this mean?
 - 9. It means that God has standards too.
 - 10. God's standards are not arbitrary. He doesn't just make them up. God's standards flow from God's character. God's commandments are what they are because God's character is what it is.
 - 11. Here's the bottom line of God's standards: God's standards are perfectly designed to protect His relationship with you—His covenant with you. When you live by God's standards, you experience His covenant love to the fullest.

12. So one question I need to ask you today is this one: have you ever entered into a covenant relationship with God through Christ? Or another way to ask that: have you ever received Jesus as your personal Savior? Have you ever deliberately, officially opened your life to the power and love of Jesus?
 13. I'm going to give you an opportunity to open your life to him today, at the end of this message. No weirdness, just a simple covenant-embracing prayer. You be ready for that, and don't freak out, because I'm not going to embarrass you.
 14. There's a price tag on this covenant: it's hugely expensive. The amazing thing is that God paid it all. The price was the death of His own Son. Christ died to reconcile alienated people like us to God. That's how far God would go to establish a covenant bond with us. With you.
 15. Don't let anything keep you from Him today.
- B. The standard of judgment: identity in Christ. Vv. 16-18
1. *16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. (Joshua 7:16-18, NKJV).*
 2. So Joshua instructs God's people to spend one day in prayer and reflection, rededicating themselves to the Lord. One day of preparation—remember that fact, we'll come back to it. Now the day has dawned. And God will identify the guilty party.
 3. Who sinned? His name is Achan. But notice how he is identified: vv. 1,16,17,18. The tribe of Judah, the family of Zarah, the household of Zabdi and the man Achan. Three times the full genealogy of this man is repeated. Why the repetition?
 4. Because Achan had an exalted identity, but he didn't act like it. He belonged to the tribe of Judah. That was the royal tribe of Israel. From this tribe would come the kings of Israel, and from this tribe would eventually come the Lord Jesus Christ. He had an exalted identity.
 5. God expected royalty, greatness, integrity, and honesty from Achan, just as God expects from you. You are responsible for the gap between the person you could become, and the person you choose to be.
 6. Ultimately, Jesus is the standard. We're supposed to be like him.
 7. Now that's bad news, because who here can really rise up to the standard of Jesus?
 8. That question tormented me for a long time. For many years, as a young Christian, I lived with guilt and shame.
 9. Then I had a breakthrough moment. I was at Wheaton College, at the Billy Graham Center, in this beautiful chapel. It has seven massive banners, twenty feet from ceiling to floor. Each one had a quote from a famous Christian. One, from a guy named Oswald Chambers, reached out and smacked me upside my head:
 - a) "If Jesus Christ were only a teacher, then all he can do is to tantalize us by erecting a standard that none of us could reach..."
 10. I read that and it clicked. For my whole life, I was trying to reach a standard I could not reach. If God's standards is Jesus, then his standards is impossibly high. Chambers continues,
 - a) "But Christ not only came to teach us, but to save us, and to make us into what He teaches us we should be."
 11. And there is the grace. God set an impossibly high standard, and then He himself meets the standard for us and through us in Christ. He does it. His power. His miracle. His grace.
 12. He will do that for you, if you ask Him. And you can ask Him today.
 13. On Judgment Day nobody will be judged for failures beyond their power to change. You can reach your true identity in Christ today.
 14. So there stands Achan, with the blood of royalty flowing through his veins, and the stolen gold of Jericho hidden under his tent.
- C. The necessity for judgment: God's glory. v. 19
1. *Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." (Joshua 7:19, NKJV).*
 2. The main purpose of all creation is to display the glory of God. The glory of God is the shining forth of the wonders of God. Achan let something else shine forth. How?
 - a) He thought he could steal from God. He let his greed shine forth.
 - b) He thought he could hide from God. Achan let his dishonesty shine forth.
 - c) He doubted God's ability to supply his heart's desires. Achan let his anxieties shine forth.
 - d) He violated God's direct command and thought he could get away with it. Achan let his disrespect shine forth.
 3. The Bible offers five (plus one) primary demonstrations of the glory of God
 - a) Creation: When God made the heavens and the earth, He put on display His wonders, His honors, His glory.

- b) Calvary: The Cross where Jesus died displayed God's glory, the glory of His justice and the glory of His grace.
 - c) Salvation: Every time one of our friends is saved, God throws a party in heaven. The angels rejoice. Heaven celebrates. The day you were saved was a day of special glory for God. That was the day you escaped final judgment once for all. And I'm hoping that today will be a day of salvation for you. It's coming soon.
 - d) Spiritual maturity: Once you're saved, you grow. When you experience the God-blessed life, you bring God maximum glory. Your grace is His glory.
 - e) Coronation Day: A day is coming when all the universe will witness the Coronation of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. And every knee will bow and bring glory to God.
4. Judgment Day: There is one more way that God receives glory: if you refuse to be saved, then God will be glorified in your damnation. Jesus taught:
- a) *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:4, 5, NKJV).*
5. Listen: One day you will meet your Maker. On that day, will you be ready? You can make sure today. One way or another God will be glorified in you.
6. So Joshua told Achan to give God glory and come clean. What happened next?
- D. The ground of judgment: our sin. Vv. 20-23
1. *20 And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it." 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23 And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. (Joshua 7:20-23, NKJV).*
 2. Achan answers, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel." The Hebrew word for sin is "[c]hata", to miss the mark. It means to fail to hit the bull's-eye. It means to fall short of God's standards of you in Christ. Achan admits that. But don't think that Achan cares about it. He doesn't.
 3. His next phrase says, "And this is what I have done." When I study the OT, I print out a copy of the chapter in Hebrew from my computer. Then I can work my way through it alongside my English Bible. So, when I first read verse 20, I thought that there was a misprint.
 4. On my computer printout the Hebrew has the same word twice. Achan answered, "And this and this is what I have done. I thought those guys who made the Hebrew software made a mistake. The NKJV, the NIV both translate it once. The NASB translates it once, but puts it twice in the margin.
 5. Then I checked the old KJV. "And thus and thus have I done." It says it twice. In fact, only a few times in the OT we have this Hebrew phrase. If you check those verses you'll see something amazing. People say "thus and thus" only when they want to take a verbal shortcut; when they want to leave out details; when they want to get it over with; when they really don't care.
 6. This may sound funny, but "thus and thus" is Hebrew for "yada, yada, yada."
 7. Achan wasn't humble. Achan wasn't contrite. Achan wasn't telling the whole story. He was still arrogant. "Yeah, I sinned, yada, yada, yada—here's what I took, it's under my tent—and do what you're gonna do, and let's get this over with."
 8. If you've ever shot an arrow, you know that the farther back you draw the bow, the more forcefully the arrow will fly. You can almost picture God drawing his bow farther back with Achan's arrogance.
 9. If you've ever stood by a dam, you know that the higher the waters go, the more forcefully the dam will break, and the more destruction the torrents of water will cause. You can almost imagine the floodwaters rising, preparing to sweep Achan away with a vengeance.
 10. So the Bible says,
 - a) *5 But no, you won't listen. So you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin. For there is going to come a day of judgment when God, the just judge of all the world, 6 will judge all people according to what they have done (Romans 2:5, 6, NLT).*
 11. And so, they run to Achan's tent, gather the evidence, and lay it out before the Lord. Judgment Day is here.
- E. The penalty of judgment: a death sentence. Vv. 24-26
1. *Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So*

the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day. (Joshua 7:24-26, NKJV).

2. Every one of us carries around an inner image of God: Our opinions, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas about what God is like. That inner image is malleable, like clay. And my job as a pastor is to mold your thoughts about God so that they increasingly conform to reality.
3. And the Bible alone offers up that reality. Not our emotions. Not our preferences.
4. If you're like most of us, you've probably molded God in some comfortable image; something you can live with, something as threatening as a puppy dog, or as comforting as a hot cup of coffee on a cold, rainy day.
5. But Scripture portrays many frightening aspects about the God we love. He is dangerous; do not provoke Him. The sentence He has established for sin is death, and it is executed without pity.
6. Not only on Achan, but his family too. I would like to think they had to know about the treasure. I would like to think they were accomplices. But I don't know. The text doesn't say. All we're left with this picture of the fierceness of God poured out on Achan and his family.
7. In the end, God always blows away our opinions of Him, He always will. For the guilty parts in our heart, there will always be something scary about the justice of God. If your imagination about God is something you can like, and something you can live comfortably with, then your imagination is wrong.
8. Judgment Day is coming.
9. And God wants you to be ready. So he has given hundreds and thousands of previews of that Day—mini-judgment Days. Achan's judgment is just one of them.
10. Every judgment throughout Scripture is a miniature edition of judgment day. Make no mistake; the point of this chapter is the satisfaction of the anger of God. Verse one introduces that anger, and verse 26 concludes saying, "So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." He let fly the arrow, and the bow was relaxed. He let burst the dam, and the pent-up waters rushed down upon Achan's head—mini-judgment day.
11. But a bigger one is coming. Are you ready? You can be ready right now.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Two big truths and we'll finish.
- B. First, Judgment Day is already concluded for true believers in Christ. If you have Jesus, your Judgment Day is over. It happened at the Cross. God poured out all His judgment for your sins on Christ. So that Scripture can say, *"There is therefore now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Rom 8:1.*
 1. Yes, there are consequences for your sins:
 - a) Inner guilt and shame,
 - b) Feeling distant from God,
 - c) Distress and calamity,
 - d) Loss of eternal reward (1 Cor 3:11:15).
 2. You meet God's standards because of a) what Christ did for you on the Cross; and b) what Christ does in you as He lives through every day and forever.
- C. Second, God gave Achan one whole day to come clean, and he didn't. God gave him time. Achan fessed up because Achan got caught. Joshua told everybody to go home and pray, because they were going to find the guy. All night long, Achan was thinking it over. Arguing with his family. Deciding. At any time, he could have gone to Joshua and said, "I'm the guy."
- D. Even as the twelve tribes came forth, he could have said, "Stop, it was me." And then the families, and then the households. It was as if God was delaying, giving Achan every chance to raise his hand and ask for mercy.
- E. But he didn't.
- F. And he met his fate.
- G. Now, God has given you this day to turn to Jesus. And I don't want to embarrass you or anything, but are you willing, are you ready to receive Jesus as your only hope—as your Savior—as the one who makes you worthy by God's own standards?
- H. Pray...