

03/22/20

Grace in the Promised Land

Full Sermon Notes

Good Morning everyone! Thanks Andrew for leading us in worship this morning. Powerful, even though we are not at the church building, you've helped us remember that the church is not a building but the people of God who can still come together even if we can't meet together in a building. This modern technology is great and we are thankful we can all join together this morning at the same time and connect with one another! However, the secret to our being able to connect during this difficult time goes far beyond technology, our connection comes by way of The Holy Spirit of God! The Scripture says that where two or three are gathered together in His Name there He is in the midst of them. God is truly with us! So our Lord is with us as we gather in our homes and connect via the internet. Last week we did this through Facebook Live. Here's what we discovered since then. Facebook live has been having trouble keeping up with the pressure of so much traffic and more churches than ever before will be utilizing Facebook this morning. We had planned on having a live service and a rebroadcast today. However, after some of our team members have had family come down with flu like symptoms we made the decision not to gather our media and worship team at the church. Therefore this broadcast is originating from Andrew's home and my home. After much discussion and praying for God to lead us in ways we could minimize interruptions, we made the decision to record this early and broadcast now at this 10:30 a.m. time via our web-site. If you've joined us on Facebook Live, you've been rerouted to this platform. This allows me to be with you this morning in a unique way. As you can see you have the ability to connect with us via the comment section. Myself and several of our other staff members are here as well and will be answering your questions and responding to comments. We will be hanging out for around 30 minutes after the message has ended as well if you have a question. As Andrew pointed out, you can click on the prayer request button and share a prayer request with our prayer team and our staff! We continue to pray for our public authorities as they are seeking to make the best decisions to protect us and the most vulnerable in our society. Continue to pray for our medical personal and first responders who are on the front lines. We have one of our own, a young man in his 30's who is fighting for his life in the ICU with the Corona Virus. Please be praying for him and for the many others who are struggling with this disease and other health maladies. We have several elderly folks who are dealing with other serious illnesses unrelated to Corona Virus, but which places them at risk. We have some of our younger people who have health issues that make them susceptible as well. Two of our teenagers and one of our young adults who are battling extremely serious cancers. So I know I've just thrown a bunch of things at you all at one time, so let's just do what times like this call for and join together in prayer as we cry out to our Lord for His intervention! I'm going to get on my knees as I pray, but remember, it's not the position of the body, but the attitude of the heart that matters most when we are praying! Let's pray!! "Father God, we do cry out to you this morning for those who are battling this virus and other serious illnesses. We pray for those who have recently lost loved ones. As we gather together in this very unique venue, we join together in seeking Your intervention in our present circumstances. I pray that our community, our nation, and our world will realize that even with all

of our medical advances, our advanced technologies and vastly increased knowledge in the sciences, we still have a dependence upon You for life that will never go away or be diminished no matter how much we learn or grow. We know You have created us with the ability to become more and more in our abilities, and advances, but today we are starkly reminded of our need for You, Your intervention, Your wisdom, Your provision, Your protection, Your presence, Your blessing, Your leadership, Your peace, and last but surely not least, Your healing! We pray you will allow the medical researchers to find solutions in days or weeks, rather than the usual years of research! Help our church to find unique ways to be a good witness and to meet the needs of our church family as well as folks in our community! Help us become closer, stronger, and even more committed to reaching our world with Your love, mercy, grace, and amazing friendship! We continue to pray for spiritual awakening and revival in our church, community and land! Hide me behind the cross of Jesus and let Your Holy Spirit teach and inspire our hearts today through Your Word!! For it is in the sweet and precious Name of Jesus I pray and believe! Amen!!

Open your Bibles to the book of Joshua chapter 2. This will be our text for today. Also, you can access the full sermon notes and read my supporting Scriptures right here on our website or through the YouVersion Bible App. The Hebrew people had spent some forty years in the wilderness because of their disobedience to God, but are now about to enter the promised land. We talked last week about the preparations needed before entering the promised land. Today we are going to talk about something that was going to be needed in the Promised Land, grace!

1. The Need For Grace in the Promised Land

Josh 2:1 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

Josh 2:2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."

Josh 2:3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."

Josh 2:4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from."

Josh 2:5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them."

Josh 2:6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)

Josh 2:7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

You might be inclined to think that God sending these two spies to Rahab's house was practical and strategic. I mean who would even pay attention to the people coming and going into a prostitute's home. People knew what she did and typically would simply turn a blind eye to the activity. However, the spies were immediately noticed and reported to the authorities. God doesn't make strategic mistakes so why would He send them to

Rahab's home if they were going to be so quickly discovered? While her lifestyle was certainly not one God would condone, I believe God knew something about Rahab's heart that no one

else knew. She was open to truth! So God's plan was practical and strategic from a spiritual standpoint because there was a need for Grace in the Promised Land

To discover the reasons there was a need for Grace in the promised land we'll need to take a little trip down memory lane! The need for grace goes back to the very beginning of human history in Genesis...

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Gen 3:2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, Gen 3:3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

Gen 3:4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

Gen 3:5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Gen 3:6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

So the original sin was a total distrust in God! Adam and Eve decided to listen to the words of the serpent rather than the Word of God! That incident is known as the fall of man! It wasn't long afterwards that murder became a part of the world, as Adam and Eve's son, Cain, killed Able.

Sin may begin small, but it always grows. Listen to God's Word on this in James...

James 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

James 1:14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

James 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

This truth is highlighted when we look just six chapters into the book of Genesis and discover how the sin Adam and Eve started had grown...

Gen 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Gen 6:6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Gen 6:7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."

Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

I don't know about you, but I'm sure grateful for old Noah and the fact he found favor in the eyes of the LORD! Noah and his family were given a new chance after the flood. A chance to start over for humanity, but it wasn't long before sin began to creep back in. And it got really bad. An old time preacher once said: "Sin will take you further than you ever thought you would go, keep you longer than you ever thought you would stay, and cost you more than you ever thought you would have to pay!"

Now let me get us from memory lane to the present situation with the Israelites in our text today as they are getting ready to enter the Promised Land. Once again, there are some really, really hard things in the Old Testament, and some of the hardest things are in the readings for this coming week. What had happened in the sinfulness of humanity was this: Things had gone from eating the forbidden fruit to things so horrible, if a modern day movie were made depicting what was happening with the people who occupied the Promised Land, it would even incense the sensibilities of our liberal society today! Things like the sacrifice of their first born in the fire in wicked and pagan worship to false gods. In your readings for this week you will read this statement Moses made to the Hebrews...

Deu 9:5 It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Deu 9:6 Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

So God was letting the Hebrew people know that even though they were His chosen people, they certainly had not earned that position and the Promised Land was not given to them based on their personal merit or righteousness. The main reason the people who occupied the Promised Land were being taken out was because of their extreme wickedness. God also knew how quickly the horrible wickedness of these people would infect the Hebrew people. And let me say once again, while I don't have all the answers and certainly have many questions, I have learned to trust God's heart in all things. There's an old song that says, "When you can't trace His hand, trust His heart." The children of those pagan cultures had witnessed horrible things and their minds and emotions were twisted beyond what could be repaired in the world at that time. I believe when the children drew their last breath on this earth, God immediately carried them to heaven where He could bring the emotional, mental and spiritual healing only He could give them.

I struggled with the issue of injustice in this world when I was a very young Christian. Around age 18 I had been struggling with the fact that I had been so rebellious and had previously rejected God, but was shown grace and mercy and allowed a second chance! I wondered how it could be just that I would make it to heaven, but someone who did not have the same opportunities I had would have to be separated from God for eternity. I pulled my little Volkswagon beetle off the interstate, crying. I grabbed my Bible and looked up the word justice in the concordance. Here's the passage God led me to, it's not one of the chapters in your reading this week, but it's powerful, Deuteronomy 32...

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32:1 Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 32:2 Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

32:3 I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God does no wrong, upright and just is he.

So I

with

share with people the love and grace of God which He offers to all! I would later learn more about the justice of God. Because He is a just God and a righteous God, wickedness cannot be left unchecked or unpunished. God knows how sin grows and that sin destroys and that the wages of sin are death! But I would also learn that while God is a just God, He is so filled with love that He offers a path for justification to those who are willing to turn from their wicked ways in order to be justified by a righteousness not their own, but provided by God! In fact, listen to these words in the Book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament that describe the heart of God towards wicked people...

Ezek 18:23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

And listen to these words found in 2 Peter...

2 Pet 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

I mentioned this earlier that God knew the heart of someone already living in the Promised Land. Someone who was not Hebrew, but who had chosen to put their trust in the God of the Hebrews.

2. Grace given in the Promised Land

Josh 2:8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she (Rahab) went up on the roof Josh 2:9 and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.

realized that I could put my questions in God's hands and trust that He would deal all people fairly. I would just have to trust that and continue to do what I could to

Josh 2:10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.

Josh 2:11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Josh 2:12 Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign

Josh 2:13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."

Josh 2:14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land."

Josh 2:15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.

Josh 2:16 Now she had said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."

How amazing is that? I believe if God knows someone has an open heart to truth, He will find a way to get that truth to them. As I said earlier, God does not delight in the death of the wicked. He would rather them turn from their wicked ways and live. And this is not just for the pagans

who lived in the land at the time of the conquest, this would apply to the Hebrew people as well. Why? Because as God had said they were “stiff-necked!” They would need grace in the promised land as well. God once again gives the covenant formula as He explains His offer to graciously be with the Hebrew people in two of our memory verses for this week...

Josh 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Josh 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Of course God knew the people would ultimately need a Savior because they would never be able to attain the righteousness needed to be right with God on their own. In fact, as we will see in the coming months of our study that God would save His people and they would do right for a short while and then go right back to their sin. God's heart was broken more than once! He would have to bring judgement on the people to bring them back to their senses. In fact listen to this passage from Isaiah...

Isa 54:7 "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

Isa 54:8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer.

There is something in our text that powerfully points to that future Redeemer who would someday come and the price He would pay to make God's grace available to all who would accept it.

3. A powerful sign of Grace to come!

Josh 2:17 The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us Josh

2:18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house.

Josh 2:19 If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him.

Josh 2:20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear."

Josh 2:21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

Isn't it amazing the cord she was to tie in the window was scarlet? Red! The color of the blood that Jesus, the Lamb of God would someday shed for the sins of the people. You might have noticed that there is a crimson chord, a scarlet thread running throughout the Old Testament that points to Jesus' sacrifice for our sin! The animal that gave its life to clothe Adam and Eve, the Ram sacrificed so that Isaac could live, the blood of the lamb placed on the door post so the death angel would pass over the Hebrews in the land of Egypt, and the sacrificial system of animals in the desert tabernacle which pointed to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice.

Now I want to point out something to you that will show you just how complete God's forgiveness and grace is once someone believes and puts their trust in The LORD. For this we are going to look at what most people skip over when they are doing Bible readings. A

genealogy! Yep! You heard me right. Let me show you something very surprising. Jesus, the Messiah, was not only a son of Abraham and David. There were a couple of surprising additions to the list and most people never catch it.

Mat 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Mat 1:2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

Mat 1:3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

Mat 1:4 Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

Mat 1:5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse,

Mat 1:6 and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

We'll stop there. Did you catch it? Something very odd in a Jewish genealogy...

There were four women listed in the genealogy of Jesus. That just wasn't done back in those days in the Jewish culture. And not only were there women listed, at least two were not even Hebrews. And this Rahab was the prostitute in our story today! What was Matthew trying to do? Stir up controversy? Not at all. He was reiterating the fact that the gift of Jesus was for everyone who would believe. Jew and Gentile, and even the prostitute who is willing to come to Jesus and ask forgiveness. Did you know that the word genealogy comes from the word genesis, which means beginning? I believe God was using the fact that Jesus' lineage ran through Rahab, a pagan prostitute, to show that Jesus will be a new beginning for anyone who would allow Him to be their Redeemer!

And maybe Rahab was included in the list, not only because she was a part of Jesus' earthly ancestry, but to show that salvation is not by your birth into a good family or your own righteousness, but by the grace of a loving, compassionate and giving God!

So there you go. If you were wondering how any of this applies to your life, I hope you heard loud and clear that salvation is not a birth right, or based on your righteousness, but it is a gift of grace offered to anyone who will receive it! Your promised land needs the grace of God too! And God knows our nation and our world needs God's grace at this time! Let's pray!