

Blended Week 13

March 22: Joshua 4-6 and Luke 2:1-24

The entire nation crosses the Jordan on dry land. Twelve men from the people, one from each tribe, are told to take one stone each and place it in the middle of the Jordan where the priests are standing. These stones are to remind the people about what God has done for them as they traveled into Jericho. The Lord again dried up the water, just as He had when the Israelites were traveling across the Red Sea. They are reminded to tell their children about what God had done for them. They are to give their testimony. The testimony of a believer is important. We can read what God has done for the people in the Bible, but we all have stories about the things that God has done for us. It is important to let people know that God is working in our lives.

A rather unpleasant thing happens for the people. Since they have been wandering the wilderness for so long, the entire generation of men were not circumcised. The LORD commands Joshua to circumcise the men “again”. By stating “again” God is reinstating the covenant He had established with Abraham. They have a feast from the produce of the land. The very next day, the manna stopped. From here on out, they will eat from the fruit of the land.

The defeat of Jericho was relatively simple. Joshua, priests carrying the ark of the Lord, seven priests with seven trumpets, and the armed men marched once around the city for six days blowing the trumpets. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times in the same way. After the seventh time, the people shouted and the walls of Jericho fell. They are warned to not take the set apart things when they go in to take the city. The treasure is set apart for The LORD. Rahab and her family are rescued, just like the spies had guaranteed they would be.

In the New Testament reading, Caesar Augustus decrees a census must be taken. So Joseph takes Mary to Bethlehem in order to be registered. While she was there, she gives birth to Jesus. The shepherds outside of Bethlehem were keeping their flocks when an angel of the Lord appeared to them and told them the great news that the Messiah had been born. The sheep these shepherds were keeping were no ordinary sheep. Those were the sheep that were sacrificed for atonement at the temple. Now that the Messiah is here, there will be no need for keeping these special sheep anymore. Instead, it will be the Messiah that will reconcile His people to Him.

March 23: Joshua 7-8 and Luke 2:25-52

Unfortunately, some of the Israelites were not faithful and took some of the forbidden things. Obviously, most of them thought everyone was faithful since when it came time to take Ai, the scouts say to only send 2,000-3,000 warfighters into Ai. They assume it will be a simple victory so there is no need to exhaust all their military forces. The army goes in and Ai fights back, killing 36 Israelites. The Israelites are disheartened and Joshua gives a similar refrain that we have seen from the people wandering the wilderness. He asks why God would do that to them. God responds that there are people that have sinned against Him in their midst. They identify the man responsible and take care of him as The LORD commanded them to.

From there, they reengage Ai. The LORD tells the Israelites that this time they can keep the plunder from the war. After defeating Ai, Joshua burns it to the ground. He builds an altar on Mount Ebal to God Almighty. They offered burnt offerings to the LORD. Joshua read them the complete law, both the blessings and the curses.

In the Luke reading, we read about Simeon's life request finally being fulfilled. He had requested that The LORD would let him live to see Messiah's arrival. Now that Jesus is here, Simeon tells the LORD that He can dismiss him now. His eyes have seen God's salvation.

The family would travel to Jerusalem every year for the Passover Festival. When Jesus was 12 years old, He decided to stay behind when they were traveling back to Nazareth. Joseph and Mary do not notice Jesus missing for a day. This might seem like negligence on their part, but back then they traveled in a large group and the assumption was that Jesus was with another group of relatives as they traveled. When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem, finding Him in the temple complex. The folks that were listening to Jesus were enthralled with His understanding of the Torah. When Joseph and Mary find him and are upset, He tells them that He was in His Father's house. The three leave from there and Jesus is obedient to Joseph and Mary.

March 24: Joshua 9-10 and Luke 3

The Gibeonites are worried about the destruction that has been wrought on everyone else in the land. They devise a plan to save themselves from destruction. So, they make it look like they have been traveling from a faraway land. They put on torn and tattered clothes, they take stale bread and cracked wineskins with them to confront the Israelites. They throw themselves at the mercy of Joshua proclaiming that they are the Israelites' servants. Joshua and the rest had some suspicion at first, but then they decided that the story checked out after observing the wineskins and bread. Things would have been much better if they had consulted with The LORD. The ruse worked and the Gibeonites form a treaty with the Israelites. Even after their deception is discovered, they cannot be harmed because of the treaty. Sometimes, people are going to come along and try to bamboozle us. We can trust, but we should also verify.

The king of Jerusalem sees that the Israelites are advancing. He gathers five other kings from neighboring lands to go against Israel. The LORD tells them not to be afraid because He has delivered them into their hands. God sends large hailstones onto the opposing armies. The hail kills more of their enemies than the Israelites did. To ensure their victory, God causes the sun and moon to stand still. Had the battle gone into the evening when it was dark, there was the possibility that the enemies would retreat. God ensured victory over Israel's enemies. Just as God gave them victory, He will give us victory as well!

In the New Testament reading, we learn about John the Baptist's early ministry. He is baptizing people and giving instruction on how to properly live. The tax collectors ask what they should do. He tells them that they should only take what they are allowed and nothing more. He tells the soldiers to be content with what they have and not take from others. It seems that most people are happy to hear this instruction and keep it. Herod, on the other hand, does not like

what John has to say at all. Herod divorced his wife so he could marry his brother Philip's wife. John calls Herod out for his sin so Herod has him put in prison.

March 25: Joshua 11-13 and Luke 4:1-32

Word is spreading of Israel's conquests. Again, God gives Joshua assurance that he does not need to be afraid of the armies. God has it all under control. The enemies will be defeated and the land will be theirs. They just have to stay the course and all will be well. A summary of all the conquests up to this point is given. We are reminded of the territories that were given to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half of Manasseh's tribe. It may seem odd that this would be placed here since we are concentrating on the battles to the west of the Jordan. Remember, though, that those three tribes requested they be given the land east of the Jordan. When they made the request, they had to swear an oath that they would still fight with the rest of the tribes. As these new lands are being conquered, we will see other tribes take possessions of those lands. These tribes already have their inheritance, so we should not expect to see them take any new lands, even though they are still fighting alongside the rest of the tribes.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus goes into the wilderness where He fasts for 40 days after He is baptized. At the end of the 40 days, He is hungry. The devil comes to tempt Him to feed Himself. Jesus can make bread for Himself, but it is not appropriate, so He uses Scripture to thwart the attack. Then the devil tries to get Jesus to take the short cut and worship the devil. Then the kingdoms and their splendor will be His. Again, Jesus stops the attack with more Scripture. In the third temptation, the devil uses Scripture to justify what he wants Jesus to do. Jesus again fights back with Scripture. As believers, it is important for us to know the Scripture and what it means. There are plenty of people out there that will justify terrible things by taking Scripture out of context. We have to be able to identify when this happens.

Jesus passes the temptation and then goes back to Nazareth via Galilee. In Galilee, plenty of people are amazed at His teaching. In Nazareth, they are less impressed. On the sabbath in the synagogue, Jesus got up to read from Isaiah. He then sits down, the mode for preaching back then, and delivers the sermon that they have seen that Scripture fulfilled. Rather than identifying Him as Messiah, the folks look at each other and say, "isn't that Joseph's son?" Jesus then prophesies that they will one day quote a proverb to Him saying "Doctor, heal yourself". They will certainly use that as they hurl insults at Him while He is hanging on the cross.

March 26: Joshua 14-15 and Luke 4:33-34

We are seeing exactly how all of the land is being allocated amongst the tribes. Caleb come to Joshua proclaiming God's goodness. The LORD has kept him alive these last 45 years. Now he is 85 years old and still feels as strong as he did on the day that Moses sent him out to scout the land of Canaan. Caleb was one of the two spies that said they should go and take the land. The rest all incited fear by warning of giants in the land. God took care of Caleb and ensured that he made it to the promised land.

We also read about the cities that Judah inherits. All these people were guaranteed an inheritance in the Promised Land. God delivers on His promises!

In the New Testament reading, Jesus is in the synagogue in Galilee. While He is teaching a man with an unclean and demonic spirit entered. The Spirit cries out, telling Jesus to leave. He knows who Jesus is and accurately describes Him as the Son of God. Jesus rebuked the spirit and made it come out of the man. The news about this event spread rapidly.

After this, Jesus went to the home of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was not feeling well and Jesus healed her. Many more came to Jesus to heal them as the day went on and through the night. When it came to be daytime, Jesus tried to get away by going to a deserted place. The people still found Him and requested that He stay in Galilee longer. Jesus explains that He must go to other towns and proclaim the good news of God's kingdom.

The Galileans wanted to keep Jesus to themselves. That was not God's plan. God's plan was to reconcile anyone who confesses Jesus as Lord. This was not contained to the Galileans or even contained to the Israelites. Jesus came for every single person.

March 27: Joshua 16-18 and Luke 5:1-16

We continue reading about the land allotments for the Israelite tribes as they settle in the Promised Land. From what we read today, not every single inhabitant of Canaan was driven out during the Israelite conquest. We find that in Ephraim and Manasseh, Canaanites remained in those lands because they could not be completely driven out. These folks wind up being forced laborers in the lands. The forced labor was a practice that was used in Canaan before the Israelites arrived. Solomon will use this labor in the building of the temple later in the Old Testament.

We also see the promise that Zelophehad's daughters would receive land since he did not have any sons. That decision was made while Moses was still alive. The people uphold their word and the women are given their inheritance.

In Joshua 18 we see the first reference to the Tent of Meeting in this book. The Tent of Meeting is where the surveyors were sent out from to make maps and establish boundaries. I find it interesting that the Temple Complex is built in Jerusalem and not in Shiloh. This most likely has to do with the fact that Shiloh is in the territory owned by Ephraim. Jerusalem was in the territory owned by Judah, the line that David and Solomon come from.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus is out gathering disciples. He goes to Simon Peter who had been out fishing all night. Back then, the men fished at night so that the catch was fresh for the market that morning. Jesus tells Simon to lower his nets. Simon states that they had been working hard all night at fishing, but had caught nothing. However, since He had told them to do it, he would go ahead and lower the nets.

Would we respond like this? Would we do the same thing that we had been doing all night long expecting a different result since God told us to do it? When The LORD tells us to keep going, we should follow His direction. God's direction is always best. Simon sees this played out when

he hauls in such a great catch that they fill up two boats. Imagine what would have happened if Simon had responded, “We’ve been doing that all night. We aren’t trying again.”

March 28: Joshua 19:20 and Luke 5:17-39

There are no boundaries for the allotment for the tribe of Simeon. The text gives us a list of towns in the southern territory of Judah. This was given to Simeon because the share for Judah’s descendants was too big for them. The town list is divided into an eastern portion (19:2-6) and western portion (19:7-8).

When all of the land had been distributed, Joshua receives his portion last. This is a great example of Joshua’s leadership and a lesson leaders can use today. Joshua, as the leader of all of the tribes took care of everyone else first. He did not use his status as the leader of the group to take his portion first. Instead, he took care of his people first, then himself. During my time in the Navy, the absolute best leaders I had were the ones that took care of their people first and took care of themselves last. As Simon Sinek puts it, “Leaders Eat Last.” If we want to be effective leaders, we can look at Joshua’s example right here in this chapter.

We also read about the cities of refuge being established. This prevented someone that accidentally killed another from being murdered. It is similar to manslaughter. The murder was not committed with evil in the perpetrator’s heart. However, there still must be some level of punishment for the crime. They were not absolved from the accidental murder, but the avenger was prevented from taking the law into his or her own hands.

In the New Testament reading, we read the account of the paralyzed man trying to get to Jesus for healing. Unfortunately, there was such a crowd that the man’s friends could not bring him to Jesus. So, they went up to the roof, made a hole in it, and then lowered their friend down. This is proof positive that the kind of people we keep in our circle of friends is important. This man’s friends would stop at nothing to help him out. Are we surrounding ourselves with other believing friends that will keep us sharp? I am not saying that every single friend we have must be a believer. However, it is important to have friends that will edify us in our walk with Christ.

Jesus heals the man lowered down. This sends the scribes into a frenzy because Jesus is pronouncing forgiveness of sin and healing the lame. Jesus then goes and finds Levi, a tax collector, and calls him to follow. Levi (who later becomes Matthew) holds a great big feast with a bunch of other tax collectors and other sinful people. The Pharisees were abhorred by what they saw, Jesus keeping company with sinful tax collectors. Jesus explains that He has come to call sinners to repentance. The irony here is that the Pharisees were themselves not nearly as perfect as they thought they were, yet they would not repent of their sins.

March 29: Joshua 21:22 and Luke 6:1-26

The Levitical families receive their land. God has kept His promise. The land that He told Abraham would be is finally owned by his descendants. From the worldly standpoint, it took quite a while to get here. Abraham had been promised this in Genesis. There was the famine, then the oppression the Israelites faced from the Egyptians, the Exodus, and the wandering

around in the wilderness. God keeps His promises. He answers prayer. Sometimes it takes a while for that prayer to be answered, but He will. Even in the waiting, God is working!

The eastern tribes are sent back to their homeland. They had requested to stay on the east side of the Jordan because of their flocks. Moses had agreed to let them occupy that land provided they fought with the rest of the tribes as they moved into Canaan. The eastern tribes upheld their end of the deal, so they are sent back to their land. When they get there, they decide to build an altar. This might not seem like such a big deal to us since Abraham built several altars while he was moving from place to place. However, it was the name of the altar that upset the western tribes and caused them to want to rise up against the eastern tribes. The altar that the eastern tribes constructed in Hebrew is “mizbeach”, a word that means slaughter. The name indicated that these tribes would be conducting animal sacrifices there. The only place that animals were to be sacrificed at was at the tent of meeting. This is what caused the uproar, the idea that they might offer sacrifices in an unauthorized place. The eastern tribes explain that they simply built the altar to show that they are united with the western tribes. The official name given to the altar is “It is a witness between us that The LORD is God.”

In the New Testament reading Jesus is out with some of His disciples on the Sabbath. The men get hungry, so they grab some grain and rub it in their hands so that they can eat it. Some Pharisees see it and become incensed that they would do “work” on the Sabbath. Jesus reminds the Pharisees of the time that David and his men were hungry, so they went and took the sacred bread, which was not lawful for anyone but the priests to eat. The Sabbath had become something that the Pharisees were serving, the Sabbath wasn’t serving them. Jesus continues to do “work” on the Sabbath. He heals a man with a paralyzed hand causing more outcry from the religious elite.

From there, Jesus goes and assembles the rest of the disciples. He continues traveling around teaching and healing. He delivers the beatitudes explaining that the poor are blessed because the kingdom of God is theirs. The beatitudes are a message of hope to the people that are struggling. They will be joyous one day. Since we know that God keeps His promises, we know that mourning will turn to joy and hunger will turn to being full.