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When Jericho Falls

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Series: Taking Ground
Joshua 6

**BIG IDEA - YOU CANNOT SEPARATE GOD'S JUDGMENT FROM
GOD'S MERCY**

Welcome to Two Cities. Have you ever heard of the walls of Jericho or the battle of Jericho? What I'm guessing is if you've been in church for any length of time, you know the basic details of the story, which are in Joshua, chapter 6. The basic details of this story are these. Joshua and the Israelite warriors march around the city of Jericho seven days in a row. On the seventh day, they shout, the walls fall down, and they take over Jericho.

If you grew up in Sunday school, you might remember the song "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho." I'm not going to sing it this morning because, first, it's a terrible song; secondly, I can't sing; and thirdly, the song doesn't even make sense. What we're going to see here is that God makes the walls fall down, not Joshua. The funny thing about this story is that we have VeggieTales episodes about it. We have all of these kids' songs about it, but the story of Jericho is largely about God's judgment.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. "Did Pastor Kyle really give Spencer the topic of God's judgment?" Yep, he did. It's funny. About a year ago, after I had to preach on a delicate topic, someone came up to me after one of the services and said, "Spencer, is you having to preach on this some kind of pastoral hazing?" I was like, "I don't know. You'll have to ask Pastor Kyle."

What we're going to do today is we're going to look at a couple of things. We're going to look at the salvation of Rahab and the judgment of Jericho. We're going to look at God's judgment and his mercy, because you cannot separate the two. Here's something I'll go ahead and say from the start: if you are reading the Bible honestly, you are going to read passages like *this* one, and you're going to have some questions.

As you read this passage, you're going to think to yourself, "Wait a second. Isn't God supposed to be slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love? How do we make sense of what we see here?" So, we'll talk about that. As we look at the battle of Jericho, we are also going to talk about what it looks like to fight and win battles.

I think about my own Community Group. Over the last six months, it feels like we have been doing nothing other than helping each other fight and try to win battles. For some of us, it's a new battle. It's the battle of a relationship stress or maybe complicated family dynamics or a health problem or job uncertainty or the loss of a loved one.

Sometimes it's a new battle, but for some people, it's the same battle they've been fighting for years. I'm sure that many of you in this room right now are in the middle of fighting your own battle. What this passage is going to lead me to do is it's going to cause me to ask this question: With that battle you're fighting, how is it going? As you fight, are you filled with faith, or, as you fight, are you on the verge of giving up?

Thankfully, God has something to say to us about what it looks like to fight battles. We're going to pick up Joshua, chapter 6. If you're new, welcome. What we've done over the last couple of weeks is we've walked through Joshua, chapters 1-5. In chapters 1-5, we saw Joshua and the people of Israel enter the land. Then today, in Joshua, chapter 6, we're going to see them conquer the land.

Verse 1: ***"Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in."*** A couple of things here. Jericho was a strong, established city. It was the size of about five football fields, and it had tall, thick walls all around it. It says here that the city was closed. These walls are shut. This is basically how the author is communicating here: these people didn't want anything to do with the God of the people of Israel.

Some of you maybe *are* there or *have* been there or know someone who's there. "I don't want anything to do with you, God. I'm totally closed off. Leave me alone." That's what these people were basically saying. Let's keep going. Verse 2: ***"And the LORD said to Joshua, 'See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.'"***

I want you to notice here that God does not say, "I *will* give," but instead he says, "I *have* given you Jericho." What God is saying is "The battle is already won. I'm going to fight this battle for you." Then what he's going to tell Joshua next is, "Even though this battle is already won, now you're going to have to work. You're going to have to show up. You're going to have to follow my instructions and do this exactly how I tell you to do it."

The principle we see here we also see throughout Scripture. The principle is this: God gives, and then God asks. This is what God does all the time. He gives, and then he asks. This is especially true when it comes to salvation. In salvation, God gives salvation freely to those who repent and believe, and then what he does next is he asks for good works. He asks for a response.

This is pretty much the opposite of every other world religion. What does Islam or Hinduism teach about salvation? Well, it's some version of *this*: "I'm going to ask you for your devotion. I'm going to ask you to be a good person and do all of these good deeds, and then, if you do a good job, you might be given salvation." What God does is he gives, and then he asks.

It's important for you to understand that you have to view God as being a God who gives and asks, because if you view him as just doing one of those things, it doesn't work out. If you view God as someone who just gives and doesn't ask, then that normally leads to rebellion. This is the person who says, "God is going to give me so much grace. God is going to forgive me. He's not really asking me to do anything." Well, that's rebellion.

If you view God as just asking and not really giving anything, well, that leads to religion. This is the person who says, "Well, God is not really giving me assurance of salvation. He just wants me to behave. He wants me to do things." God gives, and then he asks. So, maybe God has given you a great career. What he's going to ask you to do next is to live and act and speak like a Christian in the workplace. He's going to ask you to try to take some conversations from casual to meaningful to spiritual.

Maybe God gives you a dating relationship. He's going to ask you to date how he says you should date. He's going to ask you to set some emotional and sexual boundaries. Maybe God gives you the chance to retire early. What he's going to ask you is to use your discretionary time for the kingdom instead of spending it trying to master seven different hobbies.

So, the question for each of you is...*What is God asking you to do with what he has already given you?* For some of you who might be in middle school or high school, maybe God has given you a lot of friends. Maybe making friends is easy for you. What he's going to ask you to do is to welcome in others who are outside of your friend group, maybe those who don't make friends easily.

Maybe God has given you money and resources. He's going to ask you to be generous. He's going to ask you to give your first and your best. Maybe God has given you kids or grandkids. What he's going to ask you to do is to treat them like arrows and not artwork. He's going to ask you to let them take some risks. Let them go to a Christian camp or on a short-term mission trip.

Maybe God gives you a strong marriage. What he's going to ask you to do is to leverage your marriage to help others around you who are struggling. So, God gives, and then he asks. Now let's see here in verse 3 exactly what he asks of Joshua, because it's a pretty strange request. Verse 3:

"You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark [the ark of the covenant]. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him."

I want you to put yourself in Joshua's shoes here. Basically, what God just said to Joshua is, "Here's what you're going to do. For six days, you're going to march around the city once while the priests blow the trumpets, and then on the seventh day, you're going to go around it three times, and then you're all going to shout, and the walls are going to fall down."

If you're Joshua in that moment, you're thinking, "What? This makes no sense at all. This is a totally unconventional war strategy. This is bizarre." I mean, think about this. We're about to get the new steel for our building. It's very exciting. In about a week or two, they're going to deliver the steel.

Let's say once the steel shows up, Pastor Dave gathers our staff together and says, "All right, guys. This steel is not going to raise itself up, so here's what we're going to do. We're going to all hold hands. We're going to walk around this property seven times. After we do that, we're going to all sing together, 'He's Got the Whole World in His Hands.' As we sing that song, God is going to raise up the steel. We're just going to have to let go and let God build this building."

Now, if he were to say that to us, we would be like, "Well, this doesn't make any sense." This is very comparable to what he is asking Joshua to do here. What God is telling Joshua is "You are going to win this battle, but, first, you're going to have to work. You're going to have to show up. The second thing you're going to have to do is wait. I'm not going to give you the victory immediately."

If you were here last week, you heard Pastor Kyle talk a lot about waiting. He said that while we wait, God wants to mark us and mature us. When we read passages like Joshua 6, a question we need to ask ourselves is...*In the battle we fight today, when we are pursuing something good and right, how do we tend to do the opposite of working and waiting well?*

As they were marching around Jericho, what were the two biggest things they were tempted to do? The first thing they were tempted to do was *quit*. Did you know that in 2021, in the United States, 24 percent of adults quit their jobs? That's not even counting the amount of people who did what's called *quiet quitting*.

Have you heard of this? *Quiet quitting* is a new trend, mostly among Generation Z, where people are not actually quitting their jobs; they're just quitting the idea of going above and beyond. This is the person who's working from home and is slowly doing less and less and less and hoping no one notices. That's quiet quitting.

Think about this. Why do we so easily quit things as a culture? I mean, think about your New Year's resolution. How is *that* going? Did you know that 80 percent of people give up on their New Year's resolutions by February 1? We quit things so easily. We have to ask why this is. Well, there has been a lot of research done on why people quit, and I want to give you five brief reasons people tend to give up on their goals.

The first is *lack of self-confidence*. I'm sure many of you would identify with that feeling. If you lack self-confidence, your next step is probably to invite some feedback into your life. Feedback is a painful gift, but it certainly is a gift. Maybe you don't feel confident with your social skills. All right. You might need to ask someone you know and trust and someone who spends a lot of time with you, "Hey, do I do anything on a regular basis that is a little bit socially awkward?" Then see what they say.

My wife Olivia helps me out with this all the time. I recently found out that I developed the habit of praying with my hands on my face when I pray out loud at home, like *this*, to where people can't hear me. I sound muffled. Last Saturday night, we had a couple over to our house for premarital counseling. We were wrapping up, and I was praying out loud, and as I was praying, I heard from across the room, "Psst!"

Immediately, I knew. I was like, "I'm doing it again, aren't I? I'm doing the thing where I put my hands on my face." That's what we need. We need feedback, because we don't see all of our blind spots. So, you might need to invite feedback into your life. Since so many people give up due to lack of self-confidence, my question to parents is...*Are you speaking words of encouragement to your kids?*

It doesn't have to be anything crazy. Maybe it's just as simple as, "Hey, I know you have a hard semester right now. You can do it. I believe in you. Hey, I know practice is wearing you out. Keep going. You can do it. I have confidence in you." We need to speak words of confidence into each other so we don't quit.

The second reason people quit is they have *unrealistic goals*. I want to be careful here, because there is something true about the fact that we, as Christians, need to have big goals. D.L. Moody, who was a great evangelist, said, "If God be your partner, make your plans large."

That's true. We should make big goals. We should ask God to do big things, but there's a difference between your goals being totally unrealistic and what I would call *appropriately aggressive*. That's the bull's-eye for the Christian. Your goal should be appropriately aggressive.

The third reason people quit is because *progress isn't obvious*. Think about how Joshua and his army had to have felt after marching around the city for six days straight. They marched around. They were not seeing any progress. I'm sure they were like, "We need to just give up. This is not working."

Recently, I heard it said that a solution to quitting because progress isn't obvious is to make a 90-day goal. You might say, "Why 90 days?" Because 90 days is short enough for you to sprint, but it's long enough for you to actually start to see some progress. So, what would it look like for you to make four 90-day goals per year? It might help you not quit from a lack of seeing progress.

The fourth reason people quit is *major life events*. This makes sense. You can't really avoid most major life events. This is the birth of a child, death of a loved one, or losing a job. You can't really avoid it.

The fifth reason people quit is they have *no support system*. When I was working as a PA in gastroenterology, I used to see patients all the time with alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver, which is basically irreversible scarring of the liver due to excessive alcohol use. When I would see these patients, most of them would want to quit alcohol totally.

I noticed that those who were able to get into some kind of support group, like Alcoholics Anonymous, or something like that, were much more likely to achieve their goal of quitting alcohol entirely. This is one of the reasons we are so big about Community Groups here. What you need in order to live life and accomplish your goals... We need community around us. We need people who call us up, who challenge us, who hold us accountable. A support system will help you reach your goals.

So, instead of waiting well, we sometimes quit. I think we get a clue in verse 10 about what else we tend to do instead of waiting well. In verses 6-9, Joshua gives the instructions to the priests and the Israelite warriors, and then verse 10 says this: ***"But Joshua commanded the people, 'You shall not shout or make your voice***

heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout."

As the Israelite warriors are working and waiting, Joshua tells them to keep their mouths shut. This is probably not going to be the title of the sermon, but Joshua basically tells them, "Show up and shut up. That's what I want you to do." He basically gives them "silent lunch" for six days. Any of you ever have silent lunch growing up? It was like a nightmare for me. I would rather have gotten a paddle. Do they still do that in school? I would rather have gotten paddled than have silent lunch. It was terrible.

Joshua telling them to be quiet... It's a strange request, and you have to ask why he does this. Well, if you think back on what the people of Israel tended to do all the time with Moses in the wilderness, you'll get your answer. What did they do all the time? They complained. They grumbled, which is the second big thing we tend to do instead of working and waiting well. *We complain.*

Why do you complain? Well, there are a lot of reasons, but probably the main reason is you want to be understood. Why do you complain about your kids? You want to be understood. Why do you complain about your job or how hard your classes are? You normally want to be understood. When we complain, we normally ask two questions. Very simple. We ask "Why?" and we ask "When?"

Think about it with your kids. When you're on a long road trip, what are your kids complaining about? What do they say? "When are we going to be there?" My dad, growing up, would slow down the car by five miles per hour every time I asked that question. It's a pretty good strategy. I learned to stop asking pretty quickly. So, we sometimes ask "When?"

In your marriage, how do you complain? "Why do we have so many pillows on this bed?" This is what we do. We ask "Why?" and "When?" Now, I want to be clear. There is a difference between asking *God* why and complaining to others. You should feel at peace asking God why. In the Psalms, that's basically what David does all the time. He's asking God, "Why is this happening?"

David, when *he* would ask why... At the root of his question was belief. It was faith. What tends to be at the root of complaining? Unbelief. It's lack of faith. Specifically, it's a lack of faith that God could be using your circumstances for a purpose. The tough reality when it comes to asking why and when is that God might never give you an answer to your questions.

This side of eternity, you might never know why you are having to go through what you're going through. We have to understand that if God is infinite in love and infinite

in power, he's also going to be infinite in wisdom, and there are going to be a lot of things we just are not able to understand. So, we need to have the faith to wait. We need to trust God.

There are two things I want to share with you that Joshua and the Israelites had that kept them from quitting. You and I need both of these things. They had the *grace of God*, and they had *grit from God*. In verse 4, we see that the priests had the ark of the covenant with them. The ark of the covenant represented God's presence with his people, God's grace with his people.

You need God's grace in order to not give up on *your* goals. The second thing you need is grit. Angela Duckworth wrote a book called *Grit*, and her definition of *grit* was passion and perseverance for long-term goals. It takes grit to keep showing up. It took grit from God for the Israelite warriors to keep going about what God had asked them to do.

We love to see grit when it's played out. Think about Rocky in the Rocky movies, if you've seen those movies. What allowed Rocky to win those fights? It wasn't because he was the strongest or the most athletic. He had grit. He had passion and perseverance.

If you grew up playing sports, I'm sure you remember that one guy or one girl, or maybe you *were* that one guy or one girl, who wasn't the most athletic, but doggone it, you worked hard. You had passion and perseverance, so you ended up getting to play. Coaches love to call this person *scrappy*. That's another way to think about it.

I think about my wife Olivia. She's 35 weeks pregnant with our second child, so she is feeling very pregnant. Her belly is tight. Her back is hurting. She's feeling achy. There are a lot of words I could use to describe her right now, but one of those words is *grit*. She has passion and perseverance for a long-term goal.

Where do you need grace and grit? Where do you need the grace and grit of Jesus Christ? In the same way that Joshua and the Israelites didn't quit after six days, you need to not quit on something as well. Maybe it's trying to repair a damaged relationship with your spouse or with a family member. Maybe it's a child. Maybe it's a cousin. You need to not quit.

Maybe it's trying to get healthier physically, so you need to drink less and eat better and exercise more. Don't quit on that goal. Maybe you've been hurt by the church in the past, and you're hesitant to jump back in. You need to not quit. Joshua doesn't quit, and now let's see what happens next in verse 15. In verses 11-14, for six days, Joshua works and waits, and then verse 15 comes.

"On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, 'Shout, for the LORD has given you the city. And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.'"

We'll come back to this, but Joshua tells us right here why Rahab was saved. It's because she hid the messengers who were sent in chapter 2, which Hebrews 11 is going to describe as an act of faith. Rahab received mercy because of her faith. Then in verses 18-19, Joshua tells them, "Once you raid the city, no looting, no souvenirs." Then verse 20 says this:

"So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city." Here's where things get messy. "Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword."

What we're seeing here is the judgment of Jericho. What happens is the walls of Jericho fall. The warriors go inside the city, and they kill young and old, men and women, with the sword. They even kill animals. They even kill pets. With passages like this... I think a helpful way to approach the Scriptures is to ask this question: What is the average person thinking when they read this text?

I'm sure the average person, when they read this, is wondering, "Is God really this harsh? This seems pretty aggressive. Is there not some other way God could have punished the Canaanites? Why does God seem so angry here?" I've heard college students ask this question: "Is this the same God in the Old Testament that we see in the New Testament?" So, we need to talk about God's judgment.

Now, to talk about God's judgment, we first have to talk about what it is *not*. First of all, God's judgment is not aimless or accidental. His actions are never aimless or accidental. God's judgment is also not a temper-tantrum. God never loses his temper and lashes out because he's unable to control his emotions, like my 1-1/2-year-old does when someone plays with her Cocomelon school bus. That's what *she* does. She lashes out. God does not lash out.

God's judgment is his actions that are an extension of his perfect character. Now, whenever you think about the word *judgment*, you have to ask this question...*What gives someone the right to judge?* Why does God have the right to judge anyone? The

answer to that question is just one word: *authority*. Whether or not someone's decisions or actions are right or wrong depends on the authority behind those actions or decisions.

We know this is true. Think about it. You probably see once a year or so on the news that some goofy guy got arrested for impersonating a police officer. This guy is dressing up as a cop, he has put lights on his car, and he's giving people fake tickets.

It's like, "What's going on here? First of all, this is weird. Who has time to do this? Second of all, this is wrong." Why is it wrong? Because he doesn't have the authority. There are multiple kinds of authority. I want to give you three. These are the main three kinds of authority you have. God has all of them.

The first is *legal authority*. Legal authority is your ability to influence someone else based on your legal position. Parents have legal authority. Cops have legal authority. A lot of government officials have legal authority. It's funny. Most of you who are parents probably didn't like authority very much until you became a parent. Now you like it pretty good, don't you?

So, there's legal authority, and then there's *expert authority*. Expert authority is your ability to influence others based on your knowledge or expertise. If your cardiologist thinks you need to do something about your heart palpitations, you should probably listen, because they have expert authority. They have knowledge and expertise.

Expert authority is why so many of us got frustrated during COVID. We were all wondering, "Who are the experts? Certainly, Uncle Joe is not the expert. All he does is watch videos on Facebook and tag me in the comments. I don't think *he* knows what's best. Surely my favorite actress isn't an expert. I don't think we should listen to *her*. I don't think she has a degree in immunology. Who are the experts?" Expert authority is important.

The third kind of authority is *moral authority*. Moral authority is your ability to influence others based on your behavior. Have you ever had someone ask you or tell you to do something that they themselves weren't actually doing? This is the idea of someone who doesn't practice what they preach. The negative version of moral authority is not practicing what you preach.

This is the college student who is mentoring high school girls and telling them, "Don't drink before you're 21" when she's getting drunk at frat houses on the weekends. It's like, "You have no moral authority." This is the person who's just a consumer at a church but wants the church to give money to an organization they like, even though they give nothing to the church. It's like, "You have no moral authority."

The positive version of moral authority is the granddad who worked his tail off for 40 years, and because he worked so hard to provide for his family, he has the moral authority to look to his grandson and say, "You need to work harder. You need to get it together, because your effort is not enough." So, there's legal authority, expert authority, and moral authority. The thing about this is the reason God is able to judge is he has every kind of authority you can have. Jesus says, "All authority has been given to me."

So, we've talked about God's judgment, but we have to talk about this specific example. How do we make sense of what happens here with the people of Jericho, the Canaanites? There are two things we have to understand. The people of Jericho were neither innocent nor ignorant. You can read history. You can read in the Bible and see that the Canaanites were some of the most wicked, cruel, oppressive people to have ever existed.

You can read in Deuteronomy that the Canaanites were burning children as sacrifices to their idols. By the way, the mark of a culture that is wicked is that adults are sacrificing children to the idols of adults. Sound familiar? We live in a culture today where adults are totally fine with experimenting with children in order to validate adults.

So, we know Jericho was wicked, and its destruction was more of a disabling raid than anything else. It's similar to how, at the end of World War II, when they sought to get rid of the Nazi regime, they didn't try to go destroy every German city. It was just that they wanted to disable the Nazi regime. That's basically what happens here.

You might say, "Well, okay. The adults were guilty. I get it. What do we do about the kids?" It's a fair question. How do we make sense of these kids being caught up in this judgment? Well, the principle we see here is that your sin doesn't affect just you. The unfortunate reality is that your sin may affect your children, which is helpful for us to know, because it's a clear counter-vision for us.

Your lack of self-control may affect your children. Your unrighteous anger might affect your children. What you do on the weekends when no one is watching can affect your children. On the positive end, your faithfulness to your spouse will affect your children for the better. Your commitment to a local church will affect your children for the better. Your patience, your gentleness, your kindness, how you treat your spouse, how you interact with people, can all affect your children for the better.

Even though your sin might affect your children, what we see in other parts of Scripture (Ezekiel, chapter 18) is that from an eternal standpoint, God will not hold the innocent accountable for the sins of the guilty. So, with situations like this, when children get caught up in things like this, we have to understand it's almost as if God

is collecting them early. Any suffering they experience while they are on earth will ultimately be outweighed by what they eventually experience in heaven.

So, the Canaanites were not innocent, but they also weren't ignorant. Rahab tells us in chapter 2 that the Canaanites had heard about God, but they rejected him. What the Canaanites chose was rebellion instead of repentance. So, there are a couple of encouragements I want to give based off this passage we see here.

The first is if you are someone who struggles with the idea of God being a God of judgment, I want you to take a moment to think about what the opposite would be like. Would you rather God be morally indifferent? Would God be perfect if he were a morally indifferent God and didn't take stances on guys like Hitler and Stalin? I mean, these guys killed millions of people. If your God is morally indifferent, that means he's just like, "Okay. This is fine." We have to understand that part of God being perfect is he is a God who judges.

My second encouragement... This is primarily to students, but it also applies to everyone. Whenever we read passages like this, I think we can sometimes feel sheepish, maybe even a little bit embarrassed by what we read, but the principle we need to know here is: do not be ashamed of the Bible. Don't be ashamed of the Bible. We understand that God, in his wisdom and his power and his authority, has reasons for things happening even if we don't understand those reasons ourselves.

So, we've talked about the judgment of God, but what we're going to do with the rest of our time is talk about the mercy of God and what it looks like to win. Let's go to verse 22.

"But to the two men who had spied out the land, Joshua said, 'Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.' So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel."

So, here's the salvation of Rahab. We'll come back to this. Verse 24: ***"And they burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD."*** Then what happens at the end of chapter 6 is Joshua bans anyone from rebuilding Jericho.

The reason he does that, the reason he institutes this ban, is he doesn't want anyone to rebuild the city because he wants everyone who sees the city to know that God has won a victory here. He wants this city to be evidence of how God has won. So, Joshua and his warriors have worked, they have waited, and now they win.

The question we need to ask is...*What does it look like to win in the Christian life?* What would be a biblical definition of winning? The Bible seems to argue that when it comes to winning, there is a connection between the amount of gifts you have been given and the amount of gifts you are using for the glory of God.

To glorify God simply means to make his attributes more clear to more people. To glorify God is simply to make God look good. I think about the pastor of my former church in western North Carolina that I grew up in. He recently retired at age 80. Years and years, decades, of faithful ministry, but he never preached to large crowds. He never had any kind of fame.

You think about his ministry and his life. Did he win? Of course he won. He absolutely won. Why? Because he was faithful to use the gifts God had given him, and as he used his gifts, God was glorified. So, if you are wondering yourself, "Am I winning in life?" the question you should ask yourself is "How many of the gifts I've been given am I currently using?" and then you'll have your answer.

Now let's look at verse 25. Now we're going to see a picture, lastly, of the mercy of God. Again, like I said earlier, you cannot view the judgment of God without also viewing the mercy of God. The mercy of God is always present even though God does judge. So, let's look at verse 25.

"But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." We see here a picture of mercy instead of judgment in the salvation of Rahab.

When we talk about the judgment of God, we cannot forget the mercy of God. The mercy of God is when God withholds punishment toward those who are actually deserving of it. Let's take Rahab as an example. Did Rahab deserve God's judgment? She did. Yes. The Bible makes it clear that all of us outside of the grace of God are deserving of God's judgment.

The question we need to ask is not "Why did God judge them?" The question we need to ask is "Why is God not going to judge me?" If you are a Christian in this room, the answer to that question is because you have placed your faith in Christ because you have received the mercy of God.

What we see of Rahab in this passage is that she received the mercy of God. There are two things we see with her. The first thing we see is that God saw her in her sin. God sees *you* in your sin. Rahab didn't have any secrets. *You* don't have any secrets. God knew her past. God knows *your* past. God knows what you do in your free time. God knows that one thing you haven't told anybody. God sees you in your sin.

What we see with Rahab is that God saves you out of your sin. We learn in chapter 2 that Rahab and her family lived inside of the wall. What that tells us is that as everything around them was crashing down, God preserved them. God saved Rahab, which shows that God is able to save *you*, even when everything around you might be falling apart.

I'm sure there are many of you in this room who, for whatever reason, are in the middle of just mess. Maybe it was your own decisions. Maybe it was the decisions of others, but you are in the middle of a mess. You are in the middle of a battle. If that's not you, I'm sure you know someone who is. The good news for the person in the mess is that the mercy of God is available. The mercy of God is available to those who repent, to those who have a humble spirit.

Did you have this thought when we were reading through the passage? "Why did God have them march around the city for seven days? Couldn't he just have done it in one day?" Yeah, of course. God wanted to test their faith. He wanted to test their obedience. I think probably the main reason God had them march around seven days was to give the people of Jericho one last chance to receive the mercy of God, to give them one last chance to repent.

Here's the thing about the mercy of God, or here's the thing about mercy in general: if you receive it, you know it. If you receive mercy, it changes you. A couple of months ago, I made a careless mistake with a friend of mine. I didn't sin against them, but it was a careless mistake that made a situation for him worse. It didn't really affect me at all, but it made something worse for him.

I was just beating myself up about it. I couldn't sleep. I was talking to my wife about it, about how bad I felt. I was beating myself up. Then this guy calls me a day or two later, and he says, "Spencer, I know you did not mean to do this, so what I want to do right now is I want to release you from what you're feeling right now." When he said that to me, it was like a huge weight had just been lifted off my shoulders.

Essentially, what he said to me in that moment was, "No judgment for you. You just get mercy." I can remember thinking in that moment, "This is a small glimpse of what the mercy of God looks like." Rahab got a small glimpse as well. Rahab didn't get a full glimpse. It wasn't until over 1,000 years later that we would get a full glimpse of what the mercy of God looks like when Jesus Christ would come.

In the same way that the people of Israel shouted and the walls fell down, Jesus Christ himself on the cross... What did he do? He shouted. With his death and with his resurrection, he tore down the walls of eternal separation between you and God. Jesus gave the perfect example of what it looks like to have grace and grit, to have

passion and perseverance. Jesus showed us what it looks like to not quit on something.

Joshua and his warriors came to enact God's judgment with the sword. Jesus came to absorb God's judgment by taking it upon himself, by turning the sword on himself, even though he was innocent. The way Jesus won was not by taking lives but by giving his life. Jesus won in a way that led to other people winning.

Some of you in this room are winning. You have received the mercy of God. Things are going well for you. Maybe you have won when it comes to an addiction or a season of suffering. If that's you, you need to not forget Rahab. Here's another way to say it: you need to not forget the person who's in the mess.

One of the amazing things about this story is that Joshua, after the greatest victory of his career, doesn't forget Rahab. He doesn't forget the person who's in the mess. So, if you are in a season of winning, if you have received the mercy of God, who do you need to not forget?

Maybe you've made it out of a season of suffering. Maybe you've broken an addiction. Who do you need to not forget who's still in the mess? Then for those of you who are in the middle of a battle, my encouragement to you is: Would you not quit? Would you have the grace and grit that comes from knowing and walking with Jesus Christ? Would you have passion and perseverance? Let's pray together.

Father, I thank you that your mercies are new to us every morning. Your faithfulness is great. Lord, I want to pray right now for the people in this room who are in the middle of a battle. They are in the middle of a mess. It might be their own doing. It might be the decision of someone else. Father, I pray they would receive your mercy. Would you give them supernatural grace and grit that flows from you? Would you give them passion and perseverance?

I want to pray for those in this room who are caring for someone or who love someone who's in the mess. Would you give them endurance? Would you help them keep going despite feeling tired and fatigued and feeling like their prayers aren't working? Would you help them not quit as well.

Father, I thank you for how you see us in our sin, but you don't leave us there. You rescue us out of our sin. You give us mercy. Father, I pray we would be a people who have received mercy and are very quick to extend mercy to those around us. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.