

Worship in the Midst of War

by Jono Sims

Joshua's act of worship in the midst of warfare teaches us the importance of obeying God's command and finding strength in worship.

Duration: 40:40

Scripture: Deuteronomy 27:14-26, Joshua 8:30-35, Psalm 116:11, Matthew 6:33, James 1:21

Topics: "Faithful Preaching", "Worship Amidst War"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of faithful preaching and declares that the faithful man of God is called to declare the whole counsel of God, regardless of popularity. He references the apostle Paul and his commitment to preaching the truth. The preacher also shares a personal experience where he was criticized for preaching on the wrath of God, but he defends his approach by pointing to the theme of righteousness in the book of Romans. He then draws a parallel to the story of Joshua in the Bible, highlighting the importance of worshipping and praising God amidst battles and conquests.

Transcript

Would you find Joshua chapter 8 in your Bible in the Old Testament, please? Joshua chapter 8, in just a minute I want to read just verses 30 through verse number 35. I really don't want to say a whole lot other than what God's told me to preach because I just don't want to take away from what the Lord Jesus is doing in this place today. But I've been absolutely overwhelmed by the cards that you've sent to me.

I don't know that I've ever been prayed for so much in my entire life. After the meeting's over, slow it down so I won't keep getting up at 4 a.m. every morning. Thank you for praying for me.

I have just been overwhelmed by God's grace and just waking up every morning so excited and my heart so full. And that's not normal. And so, thank you for praying for me.

It's just so great to be here in this church. I know Kayla and I have never been members of First Baptist Church Muscle Shoals, but we still consider this our home church. And my best friends on the face of the planet are here in this room today.

And so, thank you for letting me be a part of what the Lord Jesus is doing here. Joshua chapter 8, verses 30 through 35. Israel has defeated Jericho.

You know that story. And after a lapse, they had also defeated Ai. And immediately after the defeat of Ai, Joshua leads the nation of Israel about 30 miles north to the valley of Shechem.

It's a valley because it has two mountains, Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. And it was here that Joshua interrupts the military conquest of Canaan to carry out and obey a command of Moses that he gave in his farewell speech to the nation. Now, Moses had given the nation of Israel some very specific instructions about what they were to do upon entering the promised land, the land of Canaan.

And those instructions can be found, if you want to study this later, in Deuteronomy chapter 27, verses 1 through verse 8. Our text parallels Deuteronomy 27. And when you read that text in Deuteronomy, Moses commanded Joshua, when the people arrived in the promised land, that they were to set up an altar of whole stones. Deuteronomy 27 too.

They were to write the entire law of God, the entire Pentateuch. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy upon that stone altar. The altar was to be set up on Mount Ebal.

And there was to be no human iron tool, no instrument used upon the construction of the altar. And according to Deuteronomy 27, 6 and 7, they were there to offer up on Ebal burnt offerings and peace offerings and ether. And the Bible goes on to say six tribes, or half of Israel, was to be over on the Mount of Cursing, Mount Ebal.

And six of the tribes were to be over on Gerizim, the Mount of Blessings. And after Joshua wrote the entire Pentateuch upon those stones, those whole stone altars, they were to read the entire law of God. And every time that Joshua read a curse, everybody over on Ebal was to shout, Amen, so be it.

And every time he read from the law of God one of the blessings, those six tribes over on Gerizim were to shout, Amen, so be the word of God. Now God had led Israel through two successful military campaigns. And now they've reached the valley of Shechem.

The very place that Moses commanded this act of worship to take place. So Joshua, the man of God that he was, the man of the word he was, ceases from war to focus on worship. I want to talk to you this morning about worship in the midst of warfare.

And that's really my prayer today, is that we would stop and worship right in the middle of whatever we're involved in. God's people must learn how to worship in the midst of the war because we're going to be there a lot. And so that's what the nation experiences right here in the valley of Shechem.

With your Bible open and in reverence to the reading of God's word, would you stand with me this morning as we read Joshua 8, verses 30 through verse number 35. Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the Law of Moses, and of course, that's Deuteronomy chapter 27. An altar of whole stones over which no man hath lifted up any iron.

And they offered their own burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel and all Israel and their elders and officers and their judges stood on this side of the ark and on that side before the priest, the Levites, which bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them, half over against Mount Gerizim and half of them over against Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded his people that they should bless the people of Israel. And

afterward, he read all the words of the Law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the Law.

There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not, before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones and the strangers that were conversant among them. Heavenly Father, I pray this morning that your Holy Spirit would do here what no man can do. I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would come and that you would illumine our minds to receive with meekness the engrafted Word of God, which this new dear sister in Christ is quoted this morning, which is able to save our souls.

Holy Spirit, have your way in this place today. In Jesus' name we pray. Let the church say, Amen.

Would you be seated, please? I love Joshua. He's one of my favorites in the Old Testament. And Joshua learned a very valuable lesson when he was defeated at Ai, one that I'm learning and one that you do well to learn.

Before victory comes true victory, we as a church must learn complete obedience to and reliance upon the Word of God. Two foes had fallen, Jericho and Ai. The logical thing to do, the common sense thing to do, the pragmatic thing to do, would be to press forward.

I mean, strike while the iron's hot. While we've got some momentum here, you know. While our enemies are terrified.

But that wasn't God's plan. God wanted His people to obey the law of God which He had given to Moses by engaging in this act of worship. So right there in a strange place, surrounded by enemies, Joshua stops the entire nation at Shechem and obeys every word of Moses to the smallest detail.

Now, we need to learn that oftentimes it's more important that we worship God and stop in the midst of what we're doing and obey rather than proceed forward in the flesh and disobey. We must learn how to worship God in the midst of warfare for this is where we draw our strength. Now, I want to share with you this morning three things that Joshua did as he led the nation of Israel in this act of worship.

First of all, we'll see, he built an altar. Second of all, he wrote the entire law of God upon those stones. And thirdly, he read every single word of the law before the whole congregation, even the little children and the strangers, those who had come among Israel, those strangers among them.

He read the law in the hearing of all those people. But notice what the Bible says in verses 30 and 31. First of all, Joshua built an altar.

The Bible says he built it on Mount Ebal, exactly as Moses had commanded. Whole stones, no iron lifted upon them, and they were to offer up burnt offerings to the Lord, sacrifice and also peace offerings. The secret to Joshua's success was his strict adherence to the written word of God because he obeyed exactly what Moses said in the construction of this altar.

Notice a few things about this altar. First of all, it was upon Mount Ebal. Now, we'll see in a moment, as I've already said, six tribes were on Gerizim.

That's the Mount of Blessing. And six tribes were over on Ebal. That is the Mount of Cursing.

When the blessings were read, those on Gerizim shouted Amen. And when the curses were read, those on Ebal shouted Amen. So be it.

But the altar of God was not built on Gerizim. You would think that it would be. You would think that God would place his altar in the place of blessing.

But in fact, God told Moses and Moses told Joshua, and Joshua built the altar on the Mount of Cursing. You say, why? Well, the word altar gives us a clue. It means the place of slaughter.

It was a place where sacrificial animals were killed and their blood offered up to God as an atonement for the sin of the worshiper. In God's substitutionary atonement economy, the blood of a sacrificial animal had to be shed and its sin was covered by that blood. Instead, the curse that should rightly fall upon the head of the worshiper instead fell upon the head of a substitute.

And that's why we use the term substitutionary atonement. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Hebrews 9.22 And of course, theologians would call this a type.

This is typology. Joshua, whose name in the Greek is translated in Hebrew, Jesus. Joshua offered up this sacrifice for sin in the very place of the curse in Mount Ebal.

Our Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ, offered up his blood in the place of a curse on a Roman cross as it is written, cursed is everyone who hangeth upon a tree. Galatians 3.13 When Jesus Christ hung on Calvary's cross, the full wrath of God rested upon Jesus. When Jesus was on the cross, the full curse of God against your sin was laid upon Him.

For God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. At your substitute, Jesus Christ not only atoned for, covered your sins, but He propitiated, appeased the wrath of God. He expiated, removed your sins as far as the east is from the west.

And through an act of divine imputation, He placed on your account what you did not have, the righteousness of God. And He placed on Christ's account what you had, your sinfulness. And now when God sees you, He sees His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has fully absorbed the wrath of God. Why? Because Romans 1.18 says that you and I are under the wrath of God and the only way Jesus Christ could save you and me was to enter into that curse and become the recipient of the wrath of God on our behalf, or there is no hope. Just like the altar on Ebal, Christ's sacrifice for sin was made at the very place of a curse.

The best place to have an altar, beloved, is where the curse of God is. That's what an altar is for. If today, this day, you realize that you are under the wrath of God, if you sense that you are cursed and near to damning, there is an altar near.

The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1.7, in Deuteronomy 27, verse 7, the people were commanded, and thou shalt offer peace offerings, listen to that, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the Lord. Think about it.

Right there on Mount Ebal, the Mount of Cursing, God's people were commanded to have peace. On the Mount of Cursing, God's people were commanded to eat. And on the Mount of Cursing, God's people were commanded to rejoice.

It reminds me of what King David said in the 23rd Psalm. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil.

My cup runneth over. Folks, listen to me. We deserve wrath.

We deserve death. We deserve to be the cursed of God forever. But instead, through Jesus Christ, right in the middle of a sin-cursed world, we get to eat, we get to have peace, we get to rejoice because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you remember our Lord's first sermon? He walked into the temple there as a rabbi, and as was customary in their day, they handed a rabbi a copy of the law, and he would read the law or the prophets. Jesus walked into the temple there, his ministry beginning, and they, recognizing Christ as a rabbi, handed him a copy of the Word. And it wasn't a coincidence, but it was sovereign engineering.

And as he opened up the Scripture to read it, this is what he read. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of the vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.

Here it is. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that we might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. Jesus said, you've got ashes? I'll give you beauty.

He said, man, are you mourning? I'll give you the oil of joy. He says, have you got a heavy spirit? I'll give you the garment of praise. Where am I going to give it to you? At the foot of the cross.

Up on Mount Ebal, in a sin-cursed world, where you live, where you work, what you experience. I can be your joy. I can be your rejoicing.

I can be your portion. That's the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ can take a mount like Ebal.

Jesus Christ can take a mount like Golgotha and turn it into a banquet room, brother. I'm telling you, that's your great need, and that's my great need. We're under the curse of God's perfect holy law.

We need an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous, and only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can the curse of God be removed from you. Flee to Mount Ebal. Flee to the Mount of Cursing.

Flee to Golgotha. It's your only hope. You know this, King of my life, I crown thee now.

Thine shall the glory be. Lest I forget thy thorn-crowned brow, lead me to Calvary. Lest I forget Gethsemane, lest I forget thine agony, lest I forget thy love for me, lead me to Calvary.

May I be willing, Lord, to bear daily the cross for thee. Even thy cup of grief to share thou hast borne all for me. Lest I forget Gethsemane, lest I forget thine agony, lest I forget thy love for me, lead me to Calvary.

We need to go to Ebal. We need to go to the Mount of Cursing. He built the altar on Mount Ebal.

Notice this. Moses commanded him to build the altar with whole stones. He said, No tool of iron is to be used in its construction.

When you look that word whole stones up, it literally means that there was no beauty in this altar. It was to be a plain, it was to be a simple altar. You see, God's forgiveness and His acceptance of sinful people does not come because of some beautiful edifice.

It doesn't come because of some lovely work of art, but because of the blood sacrifice on the top of that altar. Think about the Lord Jesus Christ. Was He not a plain man? Think about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in Isaiah, He hath no form nor comeliness. And when we see Him, there's no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. But Isaiah goes on to say, He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him. And by His stripes we are healed.

Many look at Jesus Christ as too plain. Many people look at Jesus Christ as too ordinary. Why, if we don't do exciting things in our church, nobody will be interested.

I tell you, those folks are going to miss salvation. Jesus Christ's gospel may be a plain gospel. Jesus Christ's gospel may be a simple gospel, but beloved of God, it's a whole gospel.

And the Bible reveals they built this altar with whole stones. And I'm telling you, the world is going to hell looking for the spectacular. The world is going to hell looking for a beautiful experience.

The world is going to hell believing a prosperity gospel because this world is repulsed by a blood-stained cross. Oh, that old rugged cross. So despised by the world.

Has a wondrous attraction to me. For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above to bear it to dark calvary. That which is despised and rejected by the world.

It's the most beautiful thing to the recipient of grace. We find beauty in the blood of Jesus. The world is repelled by it.

We know that the blood of Christ is the only thing that can make us whole. Jesus is that whole stone that the builders rejected. And notice that the Bible says no tool of iron was to be raised upon the construction of this altar.

Are you listening to me, church? No human work was to be associated with this sacrifice. Man had absolutely nothing to add to this altar. It stood on its own as whole.

It stood at its own as complete. And this teaches me and this teaches you that our works and our religious deeds and our jumping through hoops and our church membership does not have the power to save our souls. By grace are you saved.

Through faith. This is not of yourselves. It's the gift of God, not of works.

Lest any man should boast. And if it was, we would. The Bible says in Galatians 2, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

No extravagant altar, no beautiful ceremony, no eloquent prayer is going to help you out one bit before a holy God. God's salvation was offered up on a plain altar which He constructed before the foundation of the world. And when His sinless Son hung on that cross, He said in John 19, 30, It is finished! And church,

it's still finished today.

There's nothing to add to it. Don't bring any tools with you. Just come empty-handed before the cross of Jesus Christ and plead your case as a hell-bound sinner.

The Bible says Joshua built an altar. He built it on ebal, out of whole stones, never raising up a human implementation. Number two, He wrote the entire law of God on this altar.

The Bible says in verse 32 of Joshua 8, He wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which He wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. Now, if I've interpreted it correctly, the whole nation of Israel is hanging out while Joshua's writing Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And then after he gets through writing it, for heaven's sake, he reads it.

They don't have a puppet ministry. He doesn't use colorful illustrations. They don't have the woman with the feathered sequined hat jumping around on a tutu, you know.

He just reads the law of God. How unimpressive. Well, I guess so, unless you love Jesus.

See, everything Joshua did was regulated by the Word of God. He followed precept upon precept, line upon line. Listen to this.

Deuteronomy 27. This is what Moses commanded. Thou shalt write upon them, those stones, all the words of this law when you are passed over, that you may go into the land which the Lord your God giveth you, a land that floweth with milk and honey, as the Lord God of your fathers hath promised thee.

There they stood. There they were. Smack dab in the middle of Mount Ebal.

The Mount of Cursing. And there was this whole stone altar. And written on that whole stone altar was their problem.

The law of God. And it cursed them. The perfect law of God.

They repeatedly disobeyed it and rebelled against it. And that law condemned them as sinners under the wrath of a holy God. And the law cried out for justice.

And the law demanded their death. But then something happened. The Bible says they sacrificed peace offerings.

Zabak. It means to slaughter an animal and spill its blood on the altar. And the Bible says they offered up peace offerings.

Shalom. It means to make amends. It means to be friendly toward.

It means to be kind and forgiving. When Joshua the priest sacrificed those animals there and they took the blood and they poured it on top of that whole stone altar there on the Mount of Cursing and the blood began to go over the edges of that altar and run down that stone altar as that blood spilled over and ran down the sides of that stone altar. Brother, there were the words of the law and the blood went over those words of that law and the people no longer stood under the wrath of God.

They no longer stood condemned. They no longer had a sentence of death because the blood of Jesus Christ covered their iniquity. But did you know it wasn't a permanent solution? It was a temporary measure

at least on this day because Hebrews 10 verse 4 says it's not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.

The law has a shadow of good things to come, but it's not the very image of those things. And it can never, with all those sacrifices which they offered up year by year, continually make the comers thereunto perfect. But this man, Jesus Christ, that your pastor preached about in Hebrews, after He offered up one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God waiting until His enemies be made His footstool for by one offering He perfected forever those who are sanctified.

One day, Jesus Christ went up another cursed hill. It was not Ebal. It was Mount Calvary.

And He was the perfect whole stone which the builders rejected. No human tool went with Him. He went alone.

And there, suspended between the wrath of God and the sinfulness of man, Jesus Christ offered up His spotless blood one time forever, cried, it is finished, sat down at the right hand of God having fully atoned for the sin of His people. The law that would cry out for your death and the law that would demand your destruction in hell and the law that rightly calls down the wrath of God on you has forever been satisfied through one offering of Jesus Christ forever, never to be repeated. Joshua built an altar and he wrote the words of the law on it.

Number three, are you still with me? Then he read it. The Bible reveals in verses 33-35 that he read every word of the book of the law. Now let me take you back to my introduction.

Are you still with me? Would you say amen? Two mountains. Valley of Shechem. Mount Gerizim, the Mount of Blessing.

Mount Ebal, the other side of Shechem, the Mount of Cursing. Between those two mountains was the Ark of the Covenant, the elders of the nation, the rulers, the officers. Over on Gerizim was Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin on the Mount of Blessing.

Over on Ebal was Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, the Mount of Cursing. The Bible says Joshua read every word in the law. Are you listening to me? The good, the bad, and the ugly.

He read every word. And every time Joshua came across a blessing, those six tribes over on Gerizim shouted, Amen! Amen! And every time he read in the law of God a curse, all those six tribes over on Ebal shouted, Amen! Amen! So be it. You know what they were saying? God, we understand your law.

We have heard your law. We accept your law. We come under your law.

Blessings when we obey, and cursings when we disobey. So be it. Let God be true, but ever man a liar.

You know what that tells me for the local church of the Lord Jesus Christ today? Just a couple of things. Number one, the pastor of a local church, if he is God's man, and I recognize that little two-letter word, if, is the one that messes it up. If a pastor is a man of God, he must, like Joshua, preach all the word of God.

That which blesses as well as that which curses. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not. Verse 35 says, Joshua was my kind of preacher, brother.

He read it all. The good, the bad. The enjoyable, the painful.

The pleasures, the torments. Joshua kind of reminds me of the Apostle Paul. He said, I take record to you this day, I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

In an age of weak preaching, if we could even call it weak preaching anymore, in an age of weak preaching, and man-centeredness in our churches, the faithful man of God is not called to be popular. He is called to declare the whole counsel of God to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer. Let me tell you a second application I draw from this.

And when he does, the people of God ought to enthusiastically receive it. He has a job, but praise God, you've got one too. His job is to preach the whole counsel of God, and your job is to receive every word of God.

And let me just tell you, enthusiastically, when Joshua read a curse, they gave as hearty an amen as when he gave a blessing. Isn't that right? Did you know that the job of a pastor is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort? I'm not much of a mathematician, but it looks to me, best I can figure it, two-thirds of my ministry is reproving and rebuking, and one-third is exhorting. And by the way, let me just tell you this, I can't biblically exhort you until I've first reproved and rebuked you, because you're not ready for an exhortation until you've been corrected.

Otherwise, it's just pious platitudes, just mushy sentimentalism. The job of the faithful man of God is to preach the whole counsel of God. I just recently had a man criticize me and leave our church.

I said amen. I could say many men, but in this particular case, a man that criticized me for preaching the wrath of God. Well, it's hard to preach balloons and snow cones when you're Romans 1, folks.

My curriculum has been dictated to me. I'm the messenger. Go read Romans 1 and pray tell, how will you preach anything other than the wrath of God? And it leads way to the righteousness of God, which is the theme of the book.

But he very sharply criticized me for preaching on the wrath of God. And this is basically what he told me. He said, I came to church because I needed to be uplifted.

I came to church because I needed to be encouraged. And all I got from you week after week after week was the depravity of man and the wickedness of the world, the depravity of man and the wickedness of the world. Now, I know I can be imbalanced.

I know that. And I know I'm not above correction and rebuke. I know that too.

I write in my Bible every week when I preach verse by verse through books of the Bible, and I look the date up that he was referencing, and I knew it because he had this date marked by a significant life event. Boy, that sounds relevant, doesn't it? He had it marked by a significant life event. So I just looked in my Bible for the time of his significant life event and found out that I was in Romans chapter 1. I also found out as a Sunday school teacher, he taught the minor prophets and it was all about the wrath of God.

I guess it was okay for him to do it, but not me. Are you listening to me? Here's the problem. I don't know if this is grammatically correct or whatever, but I'm going to tell you this is the problem.

After I studied Joshua chapter 8, I've coined a new term. I call it the error of Gerizim. The error of Gerizim.

Everybody wants to go to the Mount of Blessing. Nobody wants to go to the Mount of Cursing. Make me feel good.

Tell me how worth I am. Help me bring out my self-image. Build my self-esteem.

Lift up my self-actualization. Carry me to Gerizim. You know the only problem? The altar's on Ebal.

And the problem with that crowd who only goes to Gerizim, they habitually miss the pity of God. They habitually miss the mercy of God. They habitually miss the grace of God.

They are puffed up, arrogant, self-righteous Pharisees that do not understand the substitutionary nature of God's economy. Try to hammer it out on their own. And they're mad because they never measure up, so they're going to take it out on us.

When if they would just surrender and yield to the wonderful provision of God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, they could finally enjoy this with the rest of us. The error of Gerizim. You know what breaks my heart about the error of Gerizim? Jesus suffered outside the camp.

And the writer of Hebrews says, Let us therefore go to Him. Outside the camp, bearing His reproach. This is a verse of Scripture God gave me to comfort my heart in a difficult time.

I can't tell you how confusing it gets. I can't tell you how, even though you know better, sometimes you give ear to the voice of the enemy. You start thinking, well, maybe there is something wrong with me, and maybe I am this, and maybe I am that.

Boy, Satan can really mess with your mind. Proverbs 27, verse 7, just listen. You can write it down, but just listen for right now.

Here's the problem with our Baptist churches. Well, you can't define it by one, but here's a problem. Are you listening? The full soul loatheth a honeycomb.

But to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet. You know what that means? These full, sassy, fat, and happy folks that are feeding at the world's table six days a week, and then come to the house of God and snurl their nose up at an exposition of Hebrews, snurl their nose up at an exposition of Revelation, I can tell you why. They ain't got no hunger.

You know why they have no hunger? They're full. Problem is, they've been eating at the wrong table all week long. But you know what? I've got an old boy in my church that just got saved.

Jeff and David know him because they come up and deer and turkey hunt with me, and this old boy lets us hunt his farm. He's just one of those old guys out there, brother, like this girl up in the Baptistry this morning. God just... And by the way, this is the way God does everybody.

God just saved him. He didn't want God. He wasn't looking for God.

He wasn't asking for God. God was asking for him. And God just saved this old boy.

I'm telling you, I've never been around a man, brother Tom, more hungry. Brother, I've got some folks in my church, I could preach about the celestial city, I could preach about the streets of gold, I could preach about the gates of pearl and they'd yawn, and most of them not off. This old boy right here, I could preach

on the maggots of hell, and he'd shout, Oh, glory to God! Preacher, that was the greatest thing! It changed my life! You know why? We've lost our hunger.

Just before Israel left Babylonian captivity, when they arrived there, their captors required of them a song. The Bible says they hung their harps out on the willow tree and said, how can we sing the song to the Lord in this strange land? They required mirth of us. But how can we sing the songs of Zion? You know why we've lost our joy? We've lost our appetite.

And Joshua understood this. What good is it in me leading these people forward into another battle? What good is it to conquer another city? What good is it to inherit Canaan land with milk and honey? What good is it to march through all these cities and devour them and destroy them if we don't even worship God and give Him the praise and the glory? So right in the midst of warfare, he stopped. He paused.

He got the nation focused on God for the glory of God. And you know the story from there. Nothing and no one stood in their way.

Where are you today? Are you committing the error of Gerizim? You looking for feel-good religion? All you're looking for is the blessing? God can take the curse and turn it into a banquet room. Join Him over on Gerizim. Join Him over at Mount Calvary.

And you'll find the pity and the mercy and the kindness of God that passes everything else you search and seek for. I want to ask you to stand this morning and I want to pray for you. And then I'm going to turn it over to the senior pastor.

Lord...

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