



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

God's People Living God's Way

June 6, 2021

Joshua 5:1-9

Clint Pressley

5 As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time." 3 So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. 4 And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. 5 Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. 6 For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.

8 When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9 And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

(Pastor prays)

From time to time we sing an antiphonal song, a call and response of sorts. It starts with a question and offers up an answer. "Do you feel the world is broken?" The answer is "We do." "Is all creation groaning?" the answer is "It is." I don't know when I have felt that more than I do now. Maybe you feel it too. There's confusion about gender, division on race, church people soft on abortion and unclear about morality. Meanwhile, simple Christianity is being ostracized, marginalized and even mocked. There is a certain growing societal pressure placed

on otherwise committed Christians to capitulate to the economic and social pressures, to conform to the ways of the ever-degrading world. And many previously committed people have.

But I'm convinced that God's people are made of a different kind of stuff. We are not Invictus. We are not commanders of our own fate, beaten but not unbound. That is self-pride. We are not that. We are Christians who have no fear of dying because we've already died and have been made alive in Christ. And if that's the case, there's no weapon formed against us that can stand.

And that's just the kind of sense you get in Joshua Chapter 3. And then in Chapter 4 they set up a monument. And Chapter 5 opens up with the people finally walking into the promised land. But to do so correctly, they are going to need God's power and presence and protection. And they are going to get it, but as God's people, they will need to live God's way. And that's what I want you to wrestle with for the next few moments. Am I living God's way? Because...

If we're going to be God's people, we've got to live God's way

One thing is for certain.

When God acts, people take notice.

Let's look at it. The stage is set in verse 1. Let's read it. *5 As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.*

Their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them. They were like wax next to a fire. Because the Jordan wasn't just a river, it was a natural defense, a moat. Invading armies have crossed rivers from time immemorial. Reach back into history. In fact the most celebrated event of WW2 happened 77 years ago this very day. It was the Allied invasion of Normandy, over the English Channel. Armies have crossed rivers on bridges, barges and ferries; but never like this. God's people didn't just cross the Jordan, God went ahead of them and performed a miracle for His people so that the Canaanites and Amorites would know: there is no God like our God. This God controls nature and strikes fear into the hearts of men.

Now think who these people are, the Canaanites and Amorites. These people are the same people that scared the original 12 spies (except for Caleb and Joshua) into influencing Israel to fear and not to trust God. They ended up wandering for 40 more years. What we fear, God controls. What we dread, God owns. What we need, God supplies. Not only that, every miracle is a benefit to God's people and a reminder of His deliverance.

Read the Gospels and Acts. Those miracles displayed are God's actions and they validated the Gospel of Jesus. This is what I mean by the Gospel: Jesus Christ lived perfectly fulfilling all of God's law in a way that you can't because we are sinners. Jesus didn't just *die* for us; He *lived* for us. He did that for our behalf. Jesus didn't have to earn righteousness; He is already righteous. He earned it for us. Then He was nailed to the cross and there, as our substitute, He takes the punishment - the wrath of God. He died on the cross in place of sinners. God raised Him from the dead, and all you have to do is turn from your sin and believe. There is the miracle of the Gospel, salvation. Now salvation is not a decision, its' a miracle. It is an act of God, and when God acts, people take notice. People take notice of your conversion, your walk, your love, your speech and your humility.

God's ways are not our ways

Think with me. The Canaanites are on the run. There are no giants in the land anymore. God has made them feel like mighty mites. Israel has the momentum and look what God tells Joshua to do in verse 2-3. ² *At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time."* ³ *So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.*

What General ever opened a campaign in hostile territory like this? What if Eisenhower had done this? This doesn't make any sense. This act of obedience will incapacitate the whole army right before the eyes of the enemy. Why would God have them do this now? Verses 4-5 will explain part of it, but let me make a couple of general statements.

Circumcision was the seal of God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 and the sign for God's people. And that sign gave us the groundwork for the new covenant sign of baptism. Paul says it like this in Colossians 2:11-12. ¹¹ *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,* ¹² *having been*

buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. Paul will go on to say in Philippians 3:3, ³ *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh*— It is the sign of the covenant, and act of obedience and a reminder of the power of God.

So here in Joshua all the men of fighting age would be circumcised as an act of obedience. There were hundreds of thousands of them. It was an act of devotion, and trust and abandonment to God's ways and not theirs. Our way says to strike while the iron is hot. But God is never in a hurry. He never misses a plane, wastes an opportunity or makes a mistake. God's delays are always infinitely more profitable than our hurrying. WE want to do something for God; He calls us to be more like God. They wanted to fight, win and conquer, but God called them to be consecrated and to wait.

Before I make too much application, let's hear the explanation in verses 4-6.

God is serious about sin

Let me show you where I get that. Let's read the whole passage and the explanation of why they had to be circumcised. Especially verse 6. ⁴ *And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt.* ⁵ *Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised.* ⁶ *For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

In Numbers 14, Joshua and Caleb were part of the 12 spies sent into the land. Ten spies gave a bad report and Joshua and Caleb gave a good report. Numbers 14:10 says the people tried to stone Joshua and Caleb but the glory of the Lord appeared. And Numbers 14:29-30 says ²⁹ *your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me,* ³⁰ *not one shall come into the land*

where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

A whole generation was punished and God stops them right on the edge of the promised land to remind them of His holiness and the call for His people to be holy, unlike the Canaanites.

When did it happen? In the church, holiness has gone strangely out of fashion. It has been replaced by the need to be relevant or cutting-edge, a need to be engaging and entertaining and providing community, A need to affirm and encourage... and all those things are important, but God's call on His people is holiness.

There are more words, but let me give you just two. They are **justification** and **sanctification**. Justification is a one-time event. It happens at the cross. When you repent and put your faith in Jesus, you are justified. It means that your guilt has been taken away and you are now a child of God. It's a one-time event. Sanctification is something different. Sanctification starts at the point of justification. It is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and our effort to grow and develop to become more like Christ.

If you ever wonder if you are one of God's people, you can reverse the process. Start at sanctification and look back at your life. Start asking yourself questions. Are you growing in your love for God? Do you have a deepening desire to know the Word? Are you changing? Can other people see a change in your life.? Do you actually want to be in worship? Are you thankful to God? Are you praying to God to help you?

Now maybe that's too nebulous. You can use some more practical straightforward questions. So you call yourself a Christian but are you living with someone who is not your husband or wife? Are you living with a boyfriend or girlfriend? Are you having sex before marriage or getting drunk on the weekends? Do you cuss like a sailor? Are you promiscuous? Do you absolutely lose your temper in rage? Are you prideful? Are you hateful? Are you judgmental? If you are any of those things, then why would you think that you are a believer in Jesus? I'm not saying that Christians don't sometimes fall into those things but if it is your *lifestyle*, what is it about you that makes you think you think you are a follower of Jesus? You believe in a god but its not the God of the Bible. It's not the crucified, resurrected Messiah who redeems and saves us.

Think with me about the God of the Bible. The God of wrath and grace. The God of wrath. It is a sheer act of grace that any sinner made it through the night. In Psalms, the Bible says that God feels indignation every day. He seethes at sin, despising even the garment stained with sin. That's the wrath of God. He is also a God of grace. He is a God in love who gave us Jesus to satisfy cosmic justice by dying in the place of sinners. The justice of God is served so that if you are in Christ, all the Hell that you deserve has been poured out on Jesus. Jesus died a substitute in the place of sinners. God raised Him from the dead and here is grace. If you feel a conviction and realize you are a sinner, quit defending and excusing your sin and look to Christ to save you.

This takes us one step deeper into the good news found right down there in verse 9.

When God restores, He does it completely

⁹And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

He rolled away the reproach and shame of Egypt. He removed the humiliation of being a slave in Egypt. Imagine the shame. At the cross God rolls that away. They had the sin of doubt and ingratitude. They were complainers. God rolled that away. They had the disgrace of being cowards, the lingering taste of rebellion and open wounds of abuse. God rolled that away and, in the place of reproach, God adopted them as sons and daughters and they had His affection as children of God. He gave them the promise of freedom and the reinstatement of dignity.

What a great thing. You are created in the image of God, but because of sin that image is disfigured. You come to the cross of Jesus and there He paid for your sin and, at conversion, when you become a Christian, your dignity is restored. And all of that happens when God takes away the reproach. Will you come to Jesus and have the shame taken away?

Let's bow our heads and, in the time of prayer, I want you to think: Am I walking in God's way?

(Pastor prays)