

Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was taken.¹⁷ The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken.¹⁸ Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.”

²⁰ Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹ When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³ They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD.

²⁴ Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, “Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today.” Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. ²⁶ Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since. (NIV84)

Theme: There is only one who never sinned.

When the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land God told them to take control of the whole land. They were to defeat every city and destroy all the people. The first city the Israelites went up against was the fortified city of Jericho. You may remember what happened. God had the Israelites march around the walls of the city once a day for six days. Then on the seventh day they marched around the city seven

times. Seven priests led the way carrying seven horns. After the seventh time around the priests blew the horns and the people shouted. And the walls came crashing down. They then rushed in to completely destroy the city and all its inhabitants. Joshua also told them that all the possessions of Jericho belonged to God and were to be given to him. Then Joshua warned them about taking any thing from the city for themselves. **Keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.**

God had given the Israelites a great victory—just as he had promised them. They completely destroyed the great and fortified city of Jericho by the hand of the Lord. Not one Israelite was killed—not one was even hurt. Next up was the city of Ai. It was a small city, so they figured it could be defeated with only about 3000 men. They expected a similar outcome to Jericho. God would give them a victory through little work of their own. But much to their surprise—they were routed. And 36 of their men died.

Joshua was despondent. How could God not give us a victory over such an inferior opponent? So God said to Joshua, **Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.** The reason why they didn't win was because someone kept something from Jericho for himself instead of giving it to God—so God punished the whole nation. So God had all the people gather together before him. And he meticulously singled out the specific tribe, clan, and family—and then finally the person who stole the goods of Jericho from him. It was revealed that Achan was the one who stole from the Lord. Achan confessed his sin.

It seems that he was truly sorry for what he had done. **It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.**

Achan's sin was coveting. Satan tempted him with some valuable items that would have good to own for himself. And his greed led him to steal. The love of money and possessions lead him to steal from the Lord and to hide it. Because of him, Israel lost the battle against Ai and 36 of his fellow countrymen died.

Achan fell into the temptation of greed and coveting. What about you? How does the devil tempt you to sin? Not that you sin only in one way. But the devil knows what buttons to push. He recognizes what temptations you usually fall into. Perhaps, you are like Achan. You regularly succumb to the sins of greed and coveting. You are never satisfied with what you have, and always want more. This leads you to steal. Or to keep money or possessions for yourself instead of giving them back to God or those in need.

Or perhaps you are like Adam and Eve. You want to be in control of your own life. In a sense, you want to play God. You know what God's Word says, but you would rather do something else. So you believe or do whatever you want. Maybe you are regularly tempted to commit sins against the 6th commandment like many are in the world today. Sleeping with someone outside of marriage is considered the norm. You really don't consider it a big deal to lust after someone in your heart—which is pretty easy to do with all the movies, tv shows, and websites that promote sex so much. The devil tempts us in many different ways—numerous times a day. And many times we fall to that temptation. We all fail to keep God's Word perfectly numerous times a day. And so we all deserve God's wrath and punishment. We all deserve to die eternally for just one sin—let alone all the times we have fallen into temptation.

We regularly fall into temptation. Just like Achan. Just like Adam and Eve. Just like everyone else. That is how Solomon can say in Ecclesiastes, **There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.** Except one: Jesus. Not once did he fall into temptation. That doesn't mean that the devil didn't try to get him to sin. He tried the hardest on Jesus. He tempted Jesus into sin each and every day. Yet as we saw in our gospel for today, not once did Jesus fall into temptation.

Soon after his baptism Jesus went into the wilderness by himself. During 40 days and 40 nights Jesus had nothing at all to eat. He was

physically weak and mentally exhausted. It was the perfect time for Satan to tempt Jesus. And that is what he did throughout the 40 days. Then at the end of those 40 days he made one last desperate push to get Jesus to sin. He twisted God's Word, misusing Scripture in hopes that Jesus would slip up and do what he said.

First he tempted to test Jesus with food. It was not a bad plan since he had nothing to eat for 40 days. But Jesus didn't bite. He wasn't going to perform a miracle for his own personal gain. He tempted Jesus by trying to convince Jesus to force the angels to save him. But Jesus knew about the protection God promised, but Jesus wasn't willing to test God. He also tempted Jesus saying that he would have everything in the world—if only he bowed down and worshiped Satan. He could have all he wanted without ever having to suffer and die and go through the pain and agony of hell. But Jesus refused to worship Satan. He sent Satan away. But he would come back—again and again, trying to get Jesus to sin. But not once did Jesus do anything wrong.

The writer to the Hebrews mentions this in our 2nd lesson for today.

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Jesus understands what it's like living in this sin-filled world. He lived on this earth for over 30 years. He was tempted to sin each and every day, just like you and I are. But not once did he sin. Not once did he fall into the devil's temptations. He is perfect and holy. All for us—because we could not. In 2 Corinthians Paul mentions Christ's perfect life and what it means for us. **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Jesus did this when he died on the cross. Although Jesus did no wrong, he was put to death on the cross. And Jesus willingly let himself be nailed to the cross so that he could pay for all our sins. For on the cross Jesus took all our sins upon himself. He became guilty of all our sins—all the times we have fallen into temptation. And then he suffered through the pain and agony of hell in our place. He paid the price for our sins that we should have paid—he was forsaken by God. And then he gave us his perfection. Not only did he take away our sins, but he gave us his perfect life. And now, as a result we are

perfect in God's eyes. Through the work of Christ we are pure and holy before God.

Even though we deserve to die for our sins we will not. For they have been removed. Their guilt will not come back to condemn us. For all who believe will not die, but will live forever in heaven with Christ. He makes this clear throughout his Word. Through the waters of baptism, as he did just a few minutes ago with Baye, he forgives our sins. He washes away our sinfulness—taking off our garments stained with sin, and puts his robe of righteousness around us. It is through baptism that he saves us. At it is in the Lord's Supper that he gives us his body and blood—the very things which he gave up in order to save us. Through his Holy Supper he gives us a tangible forgiveness so that we may know and not doubt that all the times we have fallen into temptation are paid for. And through his body and blood he strengthens our faith so that we may better fight off the temptations of the devil.

The forgiveness we have in Christ leads us to confess our sins. Like Achan we admit when we do wrong. But wait, why would you do that? Don't you remember what happened to Achan? He was stoned to death—him and all his family, animals, and possessions. Then he was burned. And had a pile of stones thrown on top of him. If that is what happened to Achan when he confessed his sins, than why would you want to confess your sins? When we are remorseful over our sins, when the guilt and weight of our actions weigh us down we confess our sins, and seek God's forgiveness. And we know he does forgive us. And even though Achan was put to death, the Bible doesn't say anything about his eternal punishment. For all we know, we'll see him in heaven one day. If Achan was sorry for his sin and believed in God, he would have been forgiven. And he would have joined God in heaven right after God had him put to death.

The same can be said of us. God forgives all the sins of the repentant. So we confess our sins before our Savior. And we know that through Christ, and through nothing of our own, all our sins have been removed. And while we may, like Achan have to pay the consequences of our sins while on this earth, we will not have to pay for them eternally. For Christ has already paid the eternal debt we owe for our sins. We are pure and innocent in God's eyes. And we'll live with him in heaven forever. Amen.