

**08/12/09**

**Text: Joshua 7:16-22**

**Topic: A New Year awaits to bless us as a church**

**Subtopics: But there is hidden sin in the camp**

**This must be traced out**

**The price must be paid**

**New life comes only with atonement**

It is in our nature as humans that we seek a hiding from others when we have done something wrong (sin). The guilt of our wrong may be there in us, but our desire to avoid owning up or admitting our responsibility for the wrong becomes stronger than that of bowing down in guilt and repenting. We remain uncomfortable with the guilt, but keep wishing it away hoping that it be concealed forever.

Achan a member of the Israelite army had failed a test of obedience. He has broken a command of the Lord vital to the exploit and victory of an army. And the war with small Ai, having destroyed almighty Jericho, was not only a disgrace but a catastrophe. Israel had suffered such an unimaginable casualty that left the army demoralized and the whole camp devastated.

This is unimaginable, unexpected and unusual. What has happened would have been the question? Why has God left us to this open disgrace? Something must be amiss. This problem can not be external, could not come from outside, it must be an internal moral collapse and unfaithfulness. There is sin in the camp. Someone has gone against the grain.

**1. But there is sin in the camp:**

In a strictly spiritual setting, a faith based community and especially of the Christian type, calamities do not occur without reason. Whenever there is an effect, there must be a cause. For it is unusual that things could just turn upside down without some breaking of relationship, some severity of ordinances by someone, some people. Joshua issued a search warrant as directed by God. He instituted a search. It was a very rigorous type, tribe after tribe, clan after clan, family after family, and home after home, until the culprit was located, found and pinned down. Unconfessed sin brings a looming plague on a people. And the search for it, to trace it out can be a thoroughly embarrassing exercise. Yet to be set free from continuous calamity, it is better to bear the pains of the search no matter the tediousness, dig to the

root of the sin, clear the way by repentance and punishment and be restored to terms with the Lord in relationship and fellowship. This search traced the calamity and plight of a whole people to one man. A man of greed, a man who lack self control, a man of lust, a man who knows the rules but failed or refused deliberately to keep the rule. His sin alone has led to the massacre and massive loss of lives in the rank and file and the officer cadre of the Israelite army. And much more, was the scare and jitter jotted into the whole community. The people were psychologically defeated because of the reaction of the Lord to Achan's sinful choices. The effect of secret sin can only be seen in what the people suffer. But who may be behind it, will only need to be traced. Friends, there is sin in the camp. And for as long as sin dwells in the camp, progress is impossible, it is impeded, hindered and blocked away completely. But what sin could be in our camp today as a church? In Joshua's time it was the sin of Achan, the sin of greed, the sin of lust, the sin of lack of self control, the sin of disobedience and breaking of ordinance, Achan would not resist plunders. What is the sin in our today? What secret sin is there in your life, in my life, in our lives as a people and the leaders of God's church? That sin has brought loss upon us as a church now that the year is about ending. That sin has hindered our progress as a church. That sin has brought fear and hopelessness upon us as a people. Friends, what is that sin? It must be traced, it needs to be found out. It must be dug out.

## **2. It must be traced out:**

A secret sin is the kind that the Psalmist describes as deliberate sin. The intention of going into it, is that it may not be known. That it may not be traced or discovered. Therefore, the perpetrator thereof, keeps concealing it. They keep sweeping it under the carpet, building new cardboard for it, that no one may see and no one may know. Yet as secret as it is, the dangerous and explosive nature of it is seen and felt all over the places. It grounds and paralyzes not only the sinner's life, but the life of a whole people with him. It upsets not only the perpetrator, but much the innocent of the people. Did you not see the case of Ananias and Saphira? Did you not see how restless Adam and Eve turned when they disobeyed God and heeded the voice of the devil- the serpent? In all of these instances, calamity befell all of them. And so did the secret sin of Achan cause the Israelites. And so has your and my secret sins cost us as a church. The calamity that befell Israel was traced to the tribe of Judah, and from the tribe of Judah to the clan of Zerah- the Zeraphites, then the Zimri family, and finally from man to man, Achan son of Zimri, son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah was taken. Dear people of God, a careful trace of the lack of progress of our Diocese might be trace to your or my secret sin. Would you want to confess and repent of that today or keep it secret until a public search of the Holy Spirit traces it to you? Remember that a personal decision to confess and repent of it is the best thing that will happen to you because the Lord will forgive you and

withdraw his wrath from you. When you have to be found out, you will definitely pay for it, inspite of the fact that you would have repented like Achan.

Achan was directly confronted with his sins and he admitted it. Some of us however, stick to our gans of secrecy and would not confess our sins. Joshua said to Achan, *“Give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel and give him the praise. Tel me what you have done, do not hide it away from me.”* Joshua did not pet Achan but told him that when he confesses what he has done, he would have given glory and praise to God in that.

*Achan replied, “ it is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done, when I saw the plunder, a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing about a pound, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground under my tent, with the silver underneath.”*

When you are confronted with your sins, how do you react? Sometimes our sins are directly confronted by the Holy Spirit and other times through sermons and teachings, or at times through individuals. But how do you react? Achan opened up, he accepted confessed and repented. His secret sinful plunders were recovered and publicized. Would you stand the recovery and publicity of your sinful plunders? Should a tape of your adultery, fornication, theft, lies, gossips, bitterness, and idolatry be played, shall we stand it? Concealing them does not really keep them secret and unknown for though they may be hidden from the eyes of men, they are all open and on displayed before God. You and your secret sin are stack naked before God, and they remain unknown to men. The effect of it however, is felt by the community of God’s people. Do not wait to be traced out. Open up, come out and confess your sins and you would have saved yourself and the family of God’s people there with you. And in so doing open the flood gate of heaven to bless his people, advance his cause, bring glory to his name and great fortune on his people.

### **3. The price must be paid:**

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, whatever you saw that you will reap. Every sinful choice like a righteous one has a consequence. Sin is paid by the consequence of death. *“Be sure that your sin will find you out”* (Num 32:23) *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Rom 6:23) *“The soul that sinneth shall die”* (Ezekiel 18:4) *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 6:23) No sin committed in secret and sat on remains covered. When Cain killed Abel, he thought taking him to the bush and away from men, will give him a cover, but it never did, for the blood of Abel cried up to the Lord and Cain was revealed and paid the price, when David committed adultery with Bathsheba, tried as he could to cover it, only led to the multiplicity of sins until he was discovered and

he paid the price. When Ananias and Sapphira sinned and sought a cover for it in lies, the Holy Spirit discovered them through Peter and they paid the price. Dear sinner, be sure that your sin find you out. Achan's sin found him out in a dangerously damaging manner- massive killing of soldiers, leaving a fear stricken community of widows and fatherless children. This was too costly for the children of Israel. A sacred and demoralized army was left. One could wonder why Achan was, not consumed in that war. Yet if he was, the plague would have continued on unabated. God preserved him that the root of this evil may be traced and uprooted. The destruction that secret sin brings on us can be colossal. Not only Achan, the stolen plunder of silver, the robe and the bar of gold, but his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys sheep, goat, tent and everything he had. Friends, that is how gluttonously consuming, sin can be. The sin of one family member could eat up the whole family having wasted every resource they have. The sin of one community member can cause so much havoc on a people, hinder their progress and blessing. The sin of just one person could potent such a grave danger to the remaining people that the courage and confidence to move on through life could be lost utterly. This sin of one person could block the success, victory and advancement of a people. Did you not hear God say, *"You will never defeat your enemies until you remove these things from among you?"* The children of God who seat on contraband will never see progress in their ministry. But always suffer disgrace and defeat in the hand of the enemy. Unless we exhume, transport and destroy our hidden sins, God's intervention for good eludes us forever. What sin have you laid and kept buried? What sin are you sitting on and busy petting?

Yes, for Achan, it was a beautiful robe, silver and gold, but for you and me it may be something else. May be adultery, fornication, unfaithfulness with what is set apart for the Lord- church money, school money, may be the sin of unforgiveness, lies, gossips, bitterness and maligning of others, it may be slander and character assassination, or pride and boastful tendencies. What is it that you secretly sit on friends, you need to get up, confess and repent of them that you may be blessed, that God's favour may turn at you. If all of your sinful plunders are uncovered and publicized. Can you stand it?

Achan was a great guy. He knew the law, broke it, but when found out he would not seek continues cover for his secret sins. The moment he was confronted with them, he straight away admitted. He confessed saying,

*"It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, among the plunder I saw a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200 silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest"* (Numbers 7:20-21 NLT).

As his leader Joshua demanded of him, so he poured his heart out without hiding one bit of all that needed to be told. When we are confronted with our sin how do we react? When the sermon, the teaching or the Holy Spirit pin us to our sins, what do we need to do? Genuinely confess all and repent of.

Though he was not spared the penalty, his paying the price placed a stop to continue defeat by their enemies and opened the door of victory. Achan was spared from the war that his discovery, exposure and punishment may be a deterrent to all.

We are in the period of grace, must we continue in secret sin because grace abounds? No! Not at all. For the soul that sin shall die. Our confession and repentance which becomes our testimony will save many from destruction as they will therefore learn and turn away from sin. Secret sins are committed by children of God. Why? Because they know the Lord does not like sin and they equally know that is it wrong and therefore keep it secret in an attempt to shy away from the disgrace and shame it brings upon a person, a family and a community.

Friends, blessings await us in the New Year, but sitting on secret sin will snatch and rob us of it. Secret sin is a murderer, a thief- it steals your peace, your courage and confidence and sentences you to death at the end of the day.

Because Jesus has paid it all, you will not die, but you must surely pay the price in some way if you do not confess and repent of it. Mark you, confession of sin is the soil upon which the grace of forgiveness flourishes. The Good News is that sin comes first, but grace comes thereafter, overtakes and erases it to set you free. Accept grace and renounce sin.