

Opening.

We've been studying the book of Joshua for the majority of this year so far, and for the past five weeks, Pastor Bob has been drilling down into the kings and queens that have a tendency to rule in our hearts. Do you remember the kings and queens we've been talking about? Here's that list again in case you missed it:

- Sexual perversion
- Comparison
- Man pleasing
- Busyness
- Isolation
- Insecurity
- Control (K&Q)
- Unforgiveness (K&Q)

Every week, we heard testimonies from our friends of how they struggled with these kings and queens in their lives and how they found freedom. How many of you recognized at least one of these kings or queens in your own life? How about more than one?

Pastor Bob did an amazing job paralleling the five kings in Joshua 10 to these things that can start to rule our hearts and lives. Joshua 10:22-24 says,

Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave." And they did so, and brought those five kings out to him from the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings." Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. (ESV)

With each testimony we heard these past five weeks, we brought another king or queen out of the cave and put our feet on their necks. We stripped them of any authority they had in our lives and made them a footstool under our feet. In the very next verse, Joshua passes the assurance that Yahweh gave to him:

"Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." (Joshua 10:25, ESV)

None of those kings or queens goes away on their own. We have to fight against them, but it is ultimately the work of God that removes their authority and puts them under our feet. There's an adage that goes something like this: "work like it depends on you, pray like it depends on God." That is one of the mysteries of our faith. There is a spiritual battle going on that we are a

part of and ought to be fighting, but God is ultimately sovereign and Jesus already delivered the victory by conquering sin and death.

More Kings.

If you haven't read ahead in through the rest of Joshua 10 and beyond, you might think that's where we'd be headed today. The kings have been brought out of the cave, humiliated, killed, hanged, and thrown back into the cave. Time to celebrate the victory, right? There's even another monument set up as a reminder of God's grace in defending Israel's covenant with Gibeon.

But at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day. (Joshua 10:27, ESV)

But celebration is not what happened next. Let's look at the rest of chapter 10 together, starting in verse 28:

As for Makkedah, Joshua captured it on that day and struck it, and its king, with the edge of the sword. He devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining. And he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.

10:29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah and fought against Libnah. ³⁰ And the LORD gave it also and its king into the hand of Israel. And he struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it; he left none remaining in it. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

10:31 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish and laid siege to it and fought against it. ³² And the LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he captured it on the second day and struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it, as he had done to Libnah.

Side note: the king of Lachish was one of the five kings.

10:33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish. And Joshua struck him and his people, until he left none remaining.

10:34 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon. And they laid siege to it and fought against it. ³⁵ And they captured it on that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword. And he devoted every person in it to destruction that day, as he had done to Lachish.

Side note: the king of Eglon was another of the five kings.

10:36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron. And they fought against it ³⁷ and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword, and its king and its towns, and every person in it. He left none remaining, as he had done to Eglon, and devoted it to destruction and every person in it.

Side note: the king of Hebron was another of the five kings, but true to form in ancient kingdoms, his successor took power immediately. "The king is dead; long live the king."¹

10:38 Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned back to Debir and fought against it ³⁹ and he captured it with its king and all its towns. And they struck them with the edge of the sword and devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining. Just as he had done to Hebron and to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and to its king.

10:40 So Joshua struck the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but devoted to destruction all that breathed, just as the LORD God of Israel commanded. ⁴¹ And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. ⁴² And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. ⁴³ Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

Knowing that I might be preaching today, I of course had some conversations with Pastors Bob and Craig about the sermon. They asked what if I knew what I'd be preaching on, and my response was that I would pick up in Joshua where Bob was leaving off. And the response was consistent, no matter who I was talking to: "You know what comes after the five kings, right? More kings..."

And I wrestled with that for a while. I'm thinking, haven't we been convicted enough? Do we really have to talk about more kings? Maybe I could preach about the significance of the seven monuments that were set up in Joshua. Or maybe we could just dwell on the victory over those five kings and celebrate the victories of God, but as we just read, celebration is not what came next for Israel. And it's not like I could just skip to chapter 11. There are even more kings there! The thing is, Joshua was vigilant in completing what God called him to do, and we must have the same tenacity in our walk with Christ. As a friend mine said yesterday, "Remove from your life the things that are not of God. Be ruthless [in] destroying the things of the world that want to detract from God's plan."

When we expose a false king of our heart and God puts its head under our feet, that doesn't mean we are free and clear. If we don't stay vigilant, another king can creep in and take its place. Look at Hebron. The king is dead; long live the king. When we are freed from something that has been ruling our lives, there is an opening that needs to be filled. And we can give the Sunday school answer that Jesus needs to be the one to fill that position; that God should be

¹ James Burton Coffman, "Commentary on Joshua 10:36," in *Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible*, Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA, 1983-1999, <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/joshua-10.html>.

the true King of our hearts. But how many of us have given our lives to Christ and call Him our Lord, but we are still at war against other kings? Have you ever overcome a king in your life and found freedom for a little while, but then something else took its place? How many of you have overcome an addiction or are working to overcome one right now?

I was watching a show not too long ago called *Superhot: The Spicy World Of Pepper People*, and there is a storyline in the docuseries that shows how one addiction can quickly take the place of another; how a king can be quick to take the place of another that's been dethroned. Zach Goot is a former cocaine addict who overcame his drug addiction but turned to another. There is an endorphin rush that comes from eating superhot chilis that brings on a high similar to what gets people hooked on hard drugs. Goot also began chasing YouTube fame. His wife pleaded with him to find some life balance for the sake of his family and "retire" from his YouTube account, but he acted like he was "being martyred in the quest to be a better 'family man.'"² For Goot, his addiction to cocaine was almost like Hydra from the Marvel movies. He cut the head off one king and two more grew in its place.

So, I started thinking about some other kings that might need to be addressed and the list I came up with started sounding a lot like the idols I talked about when I preached back in February. Idolatry is not something that really comes to my mind when looking at the kings, but it's hard to miss the parallel when we look at how we hold on to them and how they can take control of our lives. I'm not going to talk about more kings today or idols. If you want that sermon, you can watch or listen to it on YouTube, our website or app, or our sermon podcast. It's called "Prone to Wander" and was right before we started into Joshua.

The Significance of Gilgal.

We're not going to talk about kings or idols or battles today. We're going to talk about Gilgal. I know, it doesn't seem all that important in the grand scheme of Israel moving into the land that was promised to them. It's not listed on anyone's top 20 places to visit in Israel. It's not even a city, but a place where Israel camped when they crossed the Jordan. But there is significance to be found in Gilgal.

If you remember, Gilgal is the place where Joshua set up the twelve stones as a memorial to remember God's faithfulness in bringing Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land. It is also the place where the men of Israel were circumcised. Israel celebrated their first Passover in Canaan at Gilgal.

Even though Jericho and Ai had been conquered, Joshua and all of Israel came back to camp at Gilgal rather than moving forward and occupying the land. In the middle of chapter 10, when the five kings went into hiding, Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.

² Jim Vorel, "Hulu's Superhot Docuseries Fans the Flames of 'Pepper People' Passion," *Paste Magazine*, <https://www.pastemagazine.com/tv/chiles/superhot-hulu-docuseries-review-chiles-eating-hottest-pepper-scoville-sauces>.

(Joshua 10:15, ESV) After killing the kings and wiping out the rest of the cities in southern Canaan, “Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.” (Joshua 10:43, ESV)

Why does Joshua keep leading Israel back to the camp at Gilgal? It is the starting point for all of their battles and it is the place they return to regardless of how many forward cities they’ve leveled. What is so significant about Gilgal? The answer is in those three things I just mentioned, and they all point forward to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Gilgal is where Israel is reminded of God’s faithfulness.

²¹ And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ²² then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ ²³ For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over,” (Joshua 4:21-23, ESV).

How easy is it to forget the goodness and faithfulness of God? It might look different for you but let me share one way this temporary amnesia has manifested in my life.

I prayed for God to provide me with deep friendships. Ever since I can remember, it’s been hard for me to develop friendships. It’s not like I didn’t have any friends, but they were all pretty shallow at best. The more I got to know guys older than me, the more I heard about lifelong friends they had and the depth of those friendships. I longed for something like that.

In God’s faithfulness, He cultivated friendships with two guys in particular that could develop into those kinds of deep, lifelong friendships. The friendships grew over the course of a couple years and I would confidently say that we would do anything for each other. That is until the relationships hit some turbulence. When it comes to flying, turbulence doesn’t bother me in the slightest. When it comes to relationships, I want to either avoid turbulence altogether or get past it as quickly as possible.

Well, with these two friendships, I handled the turbulence completely differently, but the result was the same. In one case, I picked up an offense about something he said to me, and I wouldn’t let it go. Even though his motives were pure, I planted his words in a pride-filled place in my heart and let them fester like they were an attack on my character. The result was a drifting apart in our relationship.

In the other case, I saw that we were drifting apart and chose to chase after our friendship with everything in me. It was like our friendship was a campfire when you’re just getting it started and there’s not a good foundation of hot coals yet. I just dumped a bunch of full-sized logs on top and smothered the whole thing. What was a potential drifting apart became a chasm between us.

You know what's the same in both situations? I made them all about me. I don't mean I made the relationships about me, which is another problem in and of itself. The deeper problem is that I forgot that it was God's faithfulness that provided those friendships in the first place. And rather than going to God with them, I tried handle them on my own. I should have returned to the camp at Gilgal. I should have returned to the cross instead of the kings of unforgiveness and man pleasing. But honestly, those two kings are submitted to the king of pride that has still lives in my heart. I can say "pray like it depends on God," but act like everything depends on me. Even carrying around the thought that I am the only one to blame for what happened to those friendships is a form of pride.

Where do you need to be reminded of God's faithfulness? Did you start worrying about money issues after God put the queen of insecurity under your foot? Or maybe you found yourself looking at porn after a year of thinking that king of sexual perversion was put to death? Has control been resurrected in your heart even though you relinquished it to God? Come back to the camp and remember that God was faithful to deliver you before. He is still faithful today. And He is faithful to lead you through anything you come against in the future.

Gilgal is where the flesh is put to death and shame is rolled away.

The men of Israel subjected themselves to literally putting a part of their flesh to death through circumcision.

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. (Joshua 5:8-9, ESV)

Through their circumcision, God rolled away the reproach of Egypt. Another way to say that is God rolled away the shame of Egypt from them. Being under the rule of anything other than God can affect us in ways that we don't even realize keeps us under the control of that false king. One of those ways is by burdening us with shame.

Think about the kings and queens we talked about. When we feel shame from them, rather than driving us towards God, the shame draws into a cycle under the influence of that king or queen. Shame associated with man pleasing drives someone to overcompensate and try even harder. The busy find more things to do, the isolated withdraw further into isolation, the control freaks try to bring more things under their control or block out all the things they can't control. Sexual perversion leads to more perverse actions, insecurity compounds into anxiety, and comparison expands its territory. Unforgiveness turns into an immovable grudge. Shame is like being caught in a spiderweb and the spider queen is spinning you tighter and tighter.

When you think about putting the old self or the flesh to death, do you think it's something up to you to figure out how to do? Maybe with a little help from God along the way? Work like it depends on you, right? The thing is, the men of Israel didn't circumcise themselves. And we

can't put our flesh to death ourselves either. It was Joshua who did the circumcising, and he is a type of Christ. It is Christ who puts our flesh to death on the cross.

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 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. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:9-14, ESV)

You see, our flesh was put to death at the cross. We don't have a cross on the stage because it looks cool. The cross is there as a reminder of God's faithfulness and grace. It's there to remind us that our old self has been crucified with Christ on the cross. So every week, when we gather on Sunday morning, we return to the camp at Gilgal. We return to the place where our flesh was crucified. We return to the place where there is a monument of God's faithfulness. We come back to the place where our shame is rolled away like the stone at the empty tomb of Jesus.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:15, ESV)

The shame doesn't belong to you. The shame rests on the head of the king that is under your foot. God put those rulers to shame by defeating them through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Why do we return to the cross in every sermon, every Sunday? Is it because there might be someone at church who has never given their life over to Christ. Yes! Of course! Is there anyone here today who is carrying shame around with them and wants to give their life to Jesus today so He can give you a new life?

In John, chapter 3, Jesus told a Jewish ruler that you have to be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God. If you want to be born again (to receive that new life), your old life (your flesh) must be put to death. Do you want to put that old self to death today?

But what if no one responds to that call to be born again on a Sunday morning? Why do we continue to return to the cross? It's for the same reason Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal. We keep coming back because we need to be reminded of God's faithfulness. We keep returning to the cross because we need the constant reminder that our old self is dead, and our shame is rolled away. I need to be reminded of God's faithfulness and my new life in Him every day. Most days I need those reminders throughout the day.

I want to close today by paraphrasing a commentary³ that sparked this perspective of Gilgal as a shadow of the cross. I'd simply read a section, but it was written in the late 1800s, so the language is a little hard to follow.

Our nature is to argue and try to defend ourselves from having to fully surrender to God. But when our hearts turn to Christ and consider that our divine favor is bound to the fact that our flesh has been turned to nothing and we've been born again, and that God made both happen through Jesus, who had no evil but suffered death for it, then our souls are brought back to our true starting point. When we fail to judge ourselves, it is the painful circumstances that help us. If we were always walking in the power of divine truth with God, rightly judging our thoughts, motives, and actions, we would not fall into self-inflicted sorrows or need correction from our loving Father. But even though we fail in self-judgement, God is faithful; He takes good care of us and leads us to feel what cuts us when we have not returned to the camp at Gilgal.

Isaiah 53

- ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
- ² For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
- ³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
- ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
- ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
- ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

³ William Kelly, "Commentary on Joshua 12," in *Kelly Commentary on Books of the Bible*, 1860-1890, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/wkc/joshua-12.html>.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.