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This week at MRC we reached the difficult account of Achan's sin in Joshua 7. Last week the Lord had been very clear about the problem of idolatry and the fact that Israel was not allowed to keep any of the sacred items from Canaan as they defeated Jericho. 7v1 then begins with an ominous 'but'. From the start of the account we're let in on the secret that someone has stolen from the Lord.

#### **v2-5: defeat from the Lord.**

As they approach Ai, they approach in a very similar way to Jericho with spies and reports feeding back to Joshua. The (possibly complacent) report comes back that Israel doesn't need to send too many soldiers because it's only a small city. They are routed and lose 36 men. At this point we noted 2 aspects about sin:

- 1. It's not trivial.** Strikingly it was a relatively small thing stolen - we might be forgiven for thinking that it didn't matter that much! Yet the language of covenant is used (sin is not just lawbreaking but relational). There are also key words in v11 and v21 (stealing, lying and coveting) that ought to remind us of the 10 Commandments.
- 2. Sin is not individual.** Achan was not a leader but his sin affected the whole community. We noted that in our individualistic culture this feels a little alien but there are New Testament examples to reveal a continuity to us (see Revelation 2 for eg, or 1 Cor 11, James 4v3-4 or even 1 Peter 3v7). Even though we are in Christ what we do matters as he disciplines his children.

#### **v6-9: dismay before the Lord**

Joshua and the leadership have a mixed response to this news - a level of mourning (though explicitly repentance is not mentioned) and yet pleading on behalf of God's glory. If the nations see that Israel has been wiped out, what will they think about God?! Note the parallel with the whining people in Egypt wanting to go back when life got hard... Here they then are told why they lost the battle.

#### **v10-21: disclosure from the Lord**

In v10-12 God tells them what the issue is. In v13-21 he tells them how they're going to deal with it. The plan is for a massive presentation before the Lord at which the Lord tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family and man by man will be singled out. When the finger is left pointing at Achan he confesses it. The verbs in v21 are archetypal Genesis 3 type verbs (saw, took and hid). Here we may hope that that's the end of the story, however the Lord's anger has not yet been turned aside.

#### **v22-26: destruction from the Lord**

Because of God's justice, sin must be dealt with and so the family of Achan is snuffed out. Here in v26 the Lord's anger is finally removed (see v1). Achan's sacrifice gets rid of God's right anger. The wages of sin is death and so a death is needed to deal with God's justice. We applied this *individually* as we seek to kill our own sin (eg Gal 5:24 or Rom 8:13) and *corporately* as we thought through the NT equivalent of this episode as being church discipline.

We finished up profoundly thankful for Christ Jesus who dies for 'Achan's like you and me'.

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As always feel free to tweak as needed for your group:

Why does the Lord not give victory to his people at Jericho?

Do you think that's fair? Why / why not?

What does this account teach us about the nature of sin?

How is that a challenge to people in our day and age (assuming they believe in the concept of sin!)

What does this passage teach us about God?

What does this passage teach us about the nature of the Christian life? How does it change our view of sin?

How does this passage point us to Jesus?

What thing do you find hardest in this chapter?

#### Re Church discipline:

If you want to have a look at Matthew 18:15-19 - outline a potential process for church discipline in the church. How does the context of these verses shape our understanding of them?

Have a look at 1 Cor 5:1-5 and then 2 Cor 2:5-11 to see a working out of a real example. What principles can be drawn?

Why does church discipline matter?

How can church discipline be done badly?