**Series Slide**

If you’ve ever ignored, minimized, or deliberately hidden your sin…

The text today from Joshua- though ancient and strange- is going to sound oh so familiar.

If you are currently ignoring, minimizing, or deliberately hiding your sin…

…you are faced today with a choice… Trust Jesus by confessing that sin and repenting with faith that he can save you from it….or, self-deceptively raise your defenses not only to your own peril, but causing shockwaves of hurt to those around you.

* **Title Slide:** **Buried: How Hidden Sin Traps You and Repentance Sets You Free- Joshua 7**

I want you to know something though. Today- is about hope. Today- is the invitation to a turning point- out of the darkness and into the light.

You are precious and deeply loved by God. He loves you as you are, at the same time, he refuses to let you self-destruct in your sin. I have absolutely no doubt that today- he has you in this room- or on this livestream- or listening to this podcast- because he wants to save you from yourself.

So please, don’t bail on this passage, or this sermon too early. We’re going to plunge into the darkness and its going to stink. But its like going through a mountain tunnel. Things seem to get darker, but soon the light appears on the other end- and once you come out the other side- you realize that the huge mountain that once impossibly stood in your way- is now a pile of rocks getting smaller in your rearview mirror.

Turn on your headlights. Here comes the tunnel.

**Joshua 7**

* **The Israelites, however, were unfaithful regarding the things set apart for destruction. Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of what was set apart, and the Lord’s anger burned against the Israelites.**
* **2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and scout the land.” So the men went up and scouted Ai.**
* **3 After returning to Joshua they reported to him, “Don’t send all the people, but send about two thousand or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since the people of Ai are so few, don’t wear out all our people there.” 4 So about three thousand men went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. 5 The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of them and chased them from outside the city gate to the quarries, striking them down on the descent. As a result, the people lost heart.**
* **6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord until evening, as did the elders of Israel; they all put dust on their heads. 7 “Oh, Lord God,” Joshua said, “why did you ever bring these people across the Jordan to hand us over to the Amorites for our destruction? If only we had been content to remain on the other side of the Jordan! 8 What can I say, Lord, now that Israel has turned its back and run from its enemies? 9 When the Canaanites and all who live in the land hear about this, they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. Then what will you do about your great name? ”**
* **10 The Lord then said to Joshua, “Stand up! Why have you fallen facedown? 11 Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, deceived, and put those things with their own belongings. 12 This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they have been set apart for destruction. I will no longer be with you unless you remove from among you what is set apart.**
* **13 “Go and consecrate the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. You will not be able to stand against your enemies until you remove what is set apart. 14 In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the Lord selects is to come forward clan by clan. The clan the Lord selects is to come forward family by family. The family the Lord selects is to come forward man by man. 15 The one who is caught with the things set apart must be burned, along with everything he has, because he has violated the Lord’s covenant and committed an outrage in Israel.”**
* **16 Joshua got up early the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was selected. 17 He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the Zerahite clan was selected. He had the Zerahite clan come forward by heads of families, and Zabdi was selected. 18 He then had Zabdi’s family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected.**
* **19 So Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make a confession to him. I urge you, tell me what you have done. Don’t hide anything from me.”**
* **20 Achan replied to Joshua, “It is true. I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I did: 21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon, five pounds of silver, and a bar of gold weighing a pound and a quarter, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the silver under the cloak.” 22 So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there was the cloak, concealed in his tent, with the silver underneath. 23 They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and spread them out in the Lord’s presence.**

**24 Then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the cloak, and the bar of gold, his sons and daughters, his ox, donkey, and sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and brought them up to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, “Why have you brought us trouble? Today the Lord will bring you trouble! ” So all Israel stoned them to death. They burned their bodies, threw stones on them, 26 and raised over him a large pile of rocks that remains still today. Then the Lord turned from his burning anger. Therefore that place is called the Valley of Achor still today.**

* **Transition:** Today I want to show you the nature of hidden sin- how we get into it…why it costs us so much…and how to get out of it.
* **1) Sin has a predictable pattern- See-Weigh-Crave-Take-Bury.**
  + When we read through Joshua chapter 6, I pointed something out to you about the idea of “seeing”.
  + Remember Joshua and the Israelites were facing this fortified City- not feeling very good about their chances of getting in and winning the battle- and God met with Joshua and said “Hey, Are you with me? Are you going to listen to me? Follow me? Believe my promises.”
  + And the very first command he gives to Israel is to LOOK. To See.
  + **Joshua 6:2**
  + The point was- there is something I am doing that doesn’t appear to be happening- but it is. And I want you to lift your eyes….to have that Holy Imagination. The one where you can picture the shore that I am calling you to swim to. The battle is won. Even though it may appear the battle is still ahead of you- I’ve already settled it. Will you believe it and trust me?
  + Holy Imagination- seeing what God has promised before it happens.
  + **7:21**
  + When Achan describes this sin that ends up killing him, and causing the loss of lives in this battle, and the lives of his family- he starts with the same verb.
  + I saw.
  + This is the unholy imagination.
  + It means to move to the center of your gaze.
  + To behold.
  + And it works the same way the Holy Imagination does- just in reverse.
  + With a Holy Imagination- in the darkness of your circumstances, you place the light of the promise of God. Where he’s taking you and who he has called you to be.
  + With and Un-Holy Imagination- the center of your gaze is captivated by something lesser. Not necessarily evil. Its just NOT GOD. Your maker- The One who loves you and made you to know him.
  + For Achan- it was silver and gold and fashion- A stunning Babylonian Cloak.
  + For you, it could be those same things. Money- or a standard of living that allows you to participate in the finer things.
  + Or it could be a career. A family. A following on Social Media. A special person’s attention.
  + Sin always starts with seeing something other than the God who loves you and wants you to keep eye contact with him.
  + Its what marketers do so well. There is no hope of you buying something without first getting a vision for it. Knowing it exists.
  + So many products we buy aren’t because we need them…5 minutes ago you didn’t know they existed. But with analytics- those products are put before your eyes…and suddenly- what you had not vision has your attention.
  + Achan saw. Then look what’s next.
  + He doesn’t just look at the objects and look away.
  + He Weighs them.
  + He does some quick accounting. OOO- a Baylonian cloak. That’s all the rage this season! That would look SOOOOO good with my riding boots.
  + And look, five pounds of silver- or 200 shekels- a pound and a quarter or 50 shekels of gold,
  + Listen to the detail. He’s no longer just seeing. Now he’s thinking through what these things are worth. How they will change his life.
  + This is the stage of our sin where we start to get creative.
* **Back to 1)**
  + What could this stuff get me?
  + How far could I go if I just cut this ethical corner?
  + Think about the way that woman could love me better than my wife.
  + Wow- this co-worker treats me so much better than my husband. Imagine if he WAS my husband. Oh how my life would be so much better.
  + This is where seeing turns into a story. A story about how much greener the grass would be if you could just hold and have the thing you have seen.
  + How good it would feel.
  + How safe you would be.
  + How, sure, some people might think its bad- but in the end I’ll be happy with this thing, this person, because this is what 200 shekels of silver and a Babylonian cloak could get me.
  + And, the justification starts right here.
  + The reason why the affair is fine.
  + You tell yourself and others why what appears to be sin is actually good.
  + You weigh it. This is HOW MUCH I can get from having this. Or doing this.
  + You know that’s what the word “glory” means.
  + It means weight.
  + How heavy- how important- something is to you.
  + If you have ever been in this position with your sin- you know what I’m talking about. Nothing else seems important. Everything else shrinks. Even people you love, friends, family, church, responsibilities- they all start to shrink and become weightless as the thing on which you have locked your gaze is the heaviest, most important thing in your life.
  + You are giving it all the glory, and power, forever and ever. Amen.
  + It has become your god. Your salvation. Your PRECIOUS. Your glory.
  + **7:21**
  + The next thing Achan says happened was that he Coveted them.
  + Covet is another word for crave.
  + It means, “I have to have this”.
  + Nothing will stop me from getting what I have seen, what I have moved to the center of my life as the heaviest thing…I must have my glory- and now I’ll make my plan to get it.
  + Then finally- the last step- he takes them.
  + Oddly, though, look at the last step.
  + He buries them.
  + He hides them.
  + Why? Because he knows that if somebody sees him with this Babylonian cloak or all that gold or silver. They will know. He’ll be outed. He took something that God commanded them not to take.
* **Back to 1)**
  + So he buries the stuff. And in this touch of irony- the stuff that was supposed to have some wonderful effect on Achan’s life- to add beauty or security or praise- just ends up buried in the dirt. Causing him angst and anxiety- wondering when he will be found out.
  + All the promises of the story he told himself when he weighed these items…all the craving that he thought would be satisfied when he finally took them- none of that panned out. In fact, his life was worse…and so were the lives of all Israel. We’ll get to that in just a minute.
  + I called this a pattern with sin See-Weigh-Crave-Take-Bury- not just because we’ve all experienced this- but biblically- the pattern is set with the very first sin.
  + A serpent, like a good marketer, draws the attention of the woman in the Garden of Eden to the one fruit God said she couldn’t have. 5 minutes ago, she was paying no attention to it, but he markets it to her as THE THING that will change her life- make her like God- even though God had already made her in his image.
  + **Gen 3:6-7**
  + **The woman saw** (She sees the fruit) **that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at** (there she weighed it- gave it undue glory)**, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom (**She craves it because of the story she is now convinced is true- that if she eats it she will be like God) **So she took some of its fruit and ate it;** (there is the taking) **she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.** (and finally, when they hide in shame- they are burying themselves- from God’s sight)
  + Its been the same old tired story from the beginning. The Father of lies tries to make us his children- by promising that the latest and greatest flashy thing- be it money, a divorce, an affair, a new church, a new boyfriend or girlfriend, a better higher paying job, a new phone, a new car, a new house, a new child- whatever the thing is that we don’t have yet- will finally get satisfy our craving.
* **Transition:** But it always leaves us buried. And did you notice in that verse from Genesis 3- that sin spreads to those we love. Eve shared with Adam- and Achan shared the deadly effects of his sin with his family…and his whole community. And many of them ended up buried. See..
* **2) When we bury sin, it buries us- and sometimes- those we love.**
  + This passage seems unfair, doesn’t it.
  + In fact, the more familiar passage in Genesis 3, often seems unfair.
  + What’s the big deal God?
  + Eve took some fruit. Achan took a little gold, silver and a FABULOUS Babylonian cloak.
  + Why does God freak out?
  + Isn’t he overreacting?
  + I won’t take the time to fully develop this here, but the simple answer has to do with what is underneath our sin.
  + That is what we glorify.
  + What holds the deepest weight in our life.
  + See, this is about Holiness. God is beautifully other. Better, different than us.
  + And he created us to be Holy with him. Set apart for an intimate relationship with him.
  + In order to maintain that intimacy in a relationship- just like any relationship- we have to be open, vulnerable and honest.
  + Sin, by nature of making something more important than God, violates that intimacy. That’s why we try and hide our sin (and our sinful selves) from God. Because on one hand, we want this transcendent connection with the divine that we were created for, on the other hand, our seeing and weighing and craving of things not God have us battling with this other story of what life is really about- what will really satisfy.
  + So we try to hold on to the divine. At the same time we make something this other thing the most important.
  + Jesus called this out when he said- “you can’t serve 2 masters. You’ll just end up hating one of them and loving the other. You can’t serve God and money. One of them has to go.”
  + When we bury our sin- we aren’t being intimate and open with God. Yet we are (its really quite silly) we are trying to keep the all seeing God from seeing us…from seeing our other lover.
  + In fact, that is exactly the language that God uses here
  + **Joshua 7:1**
  + God’s anger burns against Israel, because the people he has set apart as his bride- are cheating on him.
  + They are unfaithful.
  + They are serving 2 masters.
  + This is adultery language. Which is the most common metaphor used for sin in all of Scripture. God’s people collectively as his bride, cheating on him. A people set apart from intimacy with God, hiding their lover in the closet, or under the bed.
  + **7:11**
  + God says, “they have violated a covenant.”
  + They have broken a marital promise.
  + And note, it is Achan’s sin that spreads out to all of Israel.
  + This is the part that we westerners have such trouble with.
  + The idea that sin is only ever individual.
  + While it is absolutely true that we are held accountable for our individual sin, sin also has a corporate effect.
  + In Christian doctrine, its known as Original Sin.
  + Through the sin of Adam and Eve- you and I are born into sin.
  + We are born into a broken system where we are bound to chase after other lovers- that are not God.
  + At the same time, we are all held responsible for our individual sin.
  + Not only that, anyone that you put yourself in relationship with, the close the relationship, the more you will feel the death that comes from their hidden sin.
  + If you are married, and your spouse cheats on you…even though you didn’t commit the sin- its effects will spread to you. At the very least, you will feel the pain of that infidelity. But you could also experience the loss of money that they spend from your joint bank account on that other lover. You will feel the wrath of the other spouse when she throws a brick through your window of the house you share. It will cost you.
  + In our communities, we all feel and experience the death that comes through littering. Regardless of whether you have ever thrown any trash out your window or not.
  + You will feel the financial effects, the emotional effects, of prescription drug abuse when you have never actual abused prescription drugs. Insurance rates go up in your community. Trust is broken and when you actually need a pain killer- you may not be able to get it because of restrictions that come.
  + The children of divorce didn’t do anything to deserve that, yet some parent’s sin still comes to visit and haunt them, many times into adulthood.
* **Back to 2)**
  + I could go on and on and on.
  + You have lived this. You know this is the nature of sin. Its death and pain spread like gangrene.
  + And ultimately, those who are closest to us, like Achan’s family, die with us. Were they helping him conceal this stuff, maybe. But even if not- what we have here is a physical representation of a spiritual reality. God takes sin very seriously among his people. Because it is a death sentence. It separates from God as it unites us to false gods that not only don’t satisfy…but they lead to death.
  + **What you bury to hide from God, will end up burying you….and no telling how many people you love.**
* **Transition**: Now the light, City Church. The way out.
* **3) Jesus is offering a better pattern- See-Weigh-Crave-Repent-Resurrect.**
  + At the end of Chapter 7, Achan is buried under a pile of stones.
  + As he receives the death that was promised would come if Israel took the things that were to be devoted to destruction. God told them they themselves would be destroyed.
  + This is not the first time we’ve seen a pile of rocks in the book of Joshua.
  + Remember in Chapter 4, God told Joshua after Israel crossed over the Jordan to set up a pile of 12 stones at Gilgal to commerate what God had done on their behalf.
  + **Joshua 4:20-24**
  + **Then Joshua set up in Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken from the Jordan, 21 and he said to the Israelites, “In the future, when your children ask their fathers, ‘What is the meaning of these stones? ’ 22 you should tell your children, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the Lord your God dried up the water of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, just as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up before us until we had crossed over. 24 This is so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord’s hand is strong, and so that you may always fear the Lord your God.”**
  + By the time we get to the end of chapter 7, we have 2 piles of rocks.
  + The one from chapter 4, that will pass on the story of God’s faithfulness to rescue his people and deliver them to the promised land.
  + That will remind generations to Come that the Lords hand is strong and will have them fearing – or placing the correct WEIGHT on God.
  + A pile of rocks that will allow them to SEE- to have a holy imagination about what God does to insurmountable obstacles for his people.
  + That will put a craving in them for his closeness and presence…to receive what he has for them. That’s what the first pile of rocks does.
  + That place was called Gilgal- which means to roll away reproach.
  + **Joshua 7:26**
  + The second pile of rocks is a reminder of what happens when our glory gets misplaced. When we see-weigh-crave-take-bury.
  + It's a reminder that God does not take our sin lightly, because he loves us…and hates to see us destroy ourselves.
  + And note, the Valley is called Achor.
  + It's a play on the name ACHAN
  + It means the valley of trouble.
  + What a monument.
  + What an anti-legacy.
  + Achan dies- and there is a pile of rocks and the name the Valley of Trouble that he leaves for his community to remember.
  + That’s dark.
  + But- with God- burials are not the end.
  + For the dead in Christ will rise.
  + There is a new covenant.
  + There is something better than the law.
  + Hosea, the prophet, foreshadows this.
  + In fact, Hosea was a prophet who was told to go feel the pain of unfaithfulness.
  + He was told to marry a prostitute, a woman who would be unfaithful to him. And to have children with her.
  + To experience the pain that God feels when we, his people, are unfaithful to him.
  + Now, listen to what God says through Hosea.
  + **Hosea 2:13-20**
    - **13 And I will punish her for the days of the Baals,**
    - **to which she burned incense.**
    - **She put on her rings and her jewelry (Sound like Achan?)**
    - **and followed her lovers,**
    - **but she forgot me.**
    - **This is the Lord’s declaration.**

But watch now the shift in language- not punishment, but compassion.

* + - **14 Therefore, I am going to persuade her,**
    - **lead her to the wilderness,**
    - **and speak tenderly to her.**
    - **15 There I will give her vineyards back to her**
    - **and make the Valley of Achor**
    - **into a gateway of hope.** The Valley of Trouble is transformed into the DOOR OF HOPE but how?
    - **There she will respond as she did**
    - **in the days of her youth,**
    - **as in the day she came out of the land of Egypt.**
    - **16 In that day —**
    - **this is the Lord’s declaration —**
    - **you will call me “My husband”**
    - **and no longer call me “My Baal.”**
    - **17 For I will remove the names of the Baals**
    - **from her mouth;**
    - **they will no longer be remembered by their names.**
    - **18 On that day I will make a covenant for them**
    - **with the wild animals, the birds of the sky,**
    - **and the creatures that crawl on the ground.**
    - **I will shatter bow, sword,**
    - **and weapons of war in the land**
    - **and will enable the people to rest securely.**
    - **19 I will take you to be my wife forever.**
    - **I will take you to be my wife in righteousness,**
    - **justice, love, and compassion.**
    - **20 I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness,**
    - **and you will know the Lord.**
* **Back to 3)**
* The question is how- How does it change? Why aren’t we stoned like Achan for the sin we bury?
* Tis because we are given something new to See.
* Jesus- God in the flesh. Crucified and resurrected. Is lifted us.
* In the face of Jesus, we know God.
* And we see his worth. A God who forgives. A God who transforms trouble into hope. A God that we aren’t just commanded to be in a relationship with, but who’s love is attractive to us.
* And because of God’s love and compassion- we crave him…like a deer pants for the water so my soul longs for you, wrote the Psalmist.
* **Joshua 7:23**
* And so, we dig up our buried sin. And we confess it. When we see Jesus Christ crucified, we lay our buried sin before God, unafraid, ready to give up the false gods we have served, and come back to the God who we have so deeply hurt with our infidelity.
  + Because of Jesus, now when you lay your sin before the Lord…you don’t die.
  + Jesus, like Achan, is the one who took on the death so the rest could live.
  + But unlike Achan- he was innocent.
  + If you think its unfair to feel the effects of someone else’s sin.
  + What about the beautiful gift of receiving the results of someone elses’ resurrection.
* **In Jesus, we are raised to newness of life. Yes, in the life to come literally when our buried bodies come up out of the ground to spend eternity with him.**
* **But also, now. As you confess your sin, to God, and to those that your buried sin has effected- you experience the resurrection of relationships. With God, with his people, with those that you pushed away when you were consumed with Idols.**
* **And like a loving Father, God, and his family- are waiting with open arms to welcome you home.**
* **Lords supper**
* Invite to repent and believe.