

Joshua 6 "The Infinite Particularity of The Lord's Mercy and Grace"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 October 2026

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, today we are looking at a part of your Word that you know, a lot of Canadians don't like, and a lot of Canadian Christians feel very uncomfortable with, and in fact often don't like it. But Father, it is your Word, and we know that you are the God of love, the God of truth and goodness and of beauty and of justice and of mercy and of grace. And we ask that you would gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit in each of our hearts, bringing the gospel and your Word to bear in our hearts, that we might be formed by the gospel and by your Word. And we ask that in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

The story that we're going to be looking at today, which Owen read the first part of, is at least within Christian circles, if you've been brought up in the Christian church, is a very, very familiar story. And it's, I think, even maybe a little bit familiar to those who are outside of the Christian faith. And it's the story of Joshua walking around the walls of Jericho, and the walls come tumbling down. Christians of a certain age range, or their parents, would know the Veggie Tales version of this story. I think Larry the Cucumber leads a group of vegetables around the walls seven times before the walls come tumbling down. It's also, I don't know how well known it is anymore, but there was a very well known African-American spiritual based on this song, Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, Jericho.

[3:05] I'm not going to sing the whole song, by the way. So it's a sort of a familiar type of story. But it's one of those stories that you might even be in a conversation with one of your friends, and they ask you something, oh, there's this really cool story, you know, there was this Veggie Tales thing about it.

And you start to read the story, and then at a certain voice you go, oh, I don't remember this being in the Veggie Tales story. And then you come to verse 21, and you go, and you look like a deer caught in the headlights. And you then wish that you hadn't shared the story with the friend who was outside the Christian faith, because it took a turn that I'm pretty sure, I didn't check this, maybe Veggie Tales has it, but I would be surprised if they do. And all of a sudden you go, I don't know if I should have read this story to my friend. So we're going to walk towards this, even this verse with the shock that makes the story seem very different than we remember. And we're not going to change the topic. It's a verse that is very upsetting to Canadians, as I said in my opening prayer, a lot of Canadians, and is upsetting to a lot of Canadian Christians. But like a lot of things in the Bible, the longer I've been a Christian, it's often when you go to those things which are most problematic for Canadians, that you get the most profound and beautiful truths and wisdom that you need to know. I mean, I'll be honest, you know, I'm sure, anyway, I mean, you know, today I think Jesus rose from the dead. I think he is the savior of the world. I think he says this is all from God,

I believe it's all from God, and it is only something that's going to be for our good if we look at it and take it to heart. So what is that shocking thing? Well, let's read the story together. It's Joshua chapter 6. Joshua chapter 6. And I'm going to read part of the chapter, and I'm going to just tell part of the chapter. And that's not because I'm trying to skip anything. One of the important things for you to bring a Bible of your own with you is because part of my job is to help you read the Bible for yourself. And so you just have a look. And if I skip something, you should, you know, George, you should have talked about that. Like, why were you not talking about it? Just ask me over coffee. But here's how it goes. And it begins, Joshua chapter 6, verse 1. And it begins like this. Now Joshua was shut up inside. Sorry, now Jericho. Sorry, that's a bad start, eh? Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua, see, I have given Jericho into your hands with its king and mighty men of valor. And just sort of pause here for a second. Two weeks ago, we were looking at the story of Joshua and the people of Israel, how they got across the Jordan River. And part of the thing that that story did is to emphasize the miracle. It mentioned that it was the spring floods. And this little detail at the beginning of the chapter is once again emphasizing how it seems as if God is asking Joshua to do something completely and utterly impossible. Because the people of Israel had been in slavery in Egypt for centuries. They had been then a nomadic people. And here they come against a very, very well-established fortress. Archaeologists have found that there was a spring within the wall. So it's a very well-designed fortress that has lasted a long time. It has a water supply within it. They're obviously prepared. And the people of Israel would have had no ability to figure out how to deal with a siege at all at this point in time. So it's emphasizing the impossibility of the task ahead of them. And therefore, God has to do something. And then what the next verses, 3 to 15, talk about, it's a sort of a very simple pattern. The Lord says to Joshua, this is what you got to do. And then Joshua says to the people, this is what you got to do. And then you see them doing what they had to do.

[7:17] And what they had to do was simply, they couldn't say a single word. So they'd go there early in the morning. I guess the people were probably far back, but the armed warriors would walk around the city of Jericho once. And as they're walking around, all completely silent, the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark of the Lord was leading their way, and trumpets were being played. And they did that for six days. And on the seventh day, they did that exact same thing the seven times. And the instruction was that it was only after that seventh time that they were to give a shout to the Lord, and then the Lord was going to do something. So that's what happened in verses 3 to 15. So turn with me to verse 16, and we see how the story continues. And the story continues like this, verse 16. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, shout for the Lord has given you the city, and the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Now just pause. That would have been the first, I don't remember that being in the VeggieTales moment, but it's going to get a bit worse actually. But that would have been the first one. I don't remember this being in the VeggieTales. Now just a little bit about how this book is written.

So it's actually written in a very intricate way, and actually in a very modern way. So just imagine that if you were doing this like as a Netflix film or something, they've already got the command that they're at a shout, it's really been what I'm going to shout, a shout of praise to the Lord, like the Lord is King, the Lord is glorious, the Lord is great, whatever that would have been, but it would have been some shout of acclamation of praise. And so if you see then in verse 16, it begins halfway through, it says shout, and now what you're doing is in Netflix, there'd be a bit of a fade, and then maybe if they're doing it really well, there'd be a change of the color, and you do a bit of a reminiscence of something about happened just a little bit beforehand, and because it wouldn't make any sense for him to yell shout, and then he goes and speaks for a while because they would have all shouted, right? So it's, and what the device is, is so it moves back in time, and it's also moving back in time to show that what's going to happen in verses 16 and a half to the end of 21 is really important. So it's designed to draw out this, the importance of this bit, okay? Sorry, that's a bit of a nerdy thing, but just so you understand, I think, why would he say that, and no, no, just imagine that he takes a step back in time, and then he rush, he's going to run, then he's going to rush forward in time in verse 20. We're right back to the present. So here's what, here's what he says again, first, last part of verse 16, shout, for the Lord has given you the city, and the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. I'm going to talk about that in a moment.

Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. But you keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. Just pause. I'm not going to say anything about this in this sermon. It's actually an important thing for next week's sermon, the story of Achan, and I'll talk about that next week. Verse 19, but all silver and gold and every vessel of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord, they shall go into the treasury of the Lord. So the people shouted, now we're in the present time again for the story, the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown.

As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.

And now the verse, verse 21, then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys with the edge of the sword.

Now I'm pretty sure that's not in Veggie Tales. And it's, that's the moment devoted to destruction makes you pause. That's the moment you say to yourself, I should not have read this story to my friends, because we're very uncomfortable with this, and we're uncomfortable about it for potentially a whole reason, a whole pile of, of very, very good reasons. Now, uh, so here, so those of you who've been tracking with my sermons, and I don't expect you, you know, they, they say that people remember 10% of what they hear, so I don't expect you to remember anything I said a couple of weeks ago. I can barely remember what I said a couple of weeks ago. But, uh, you know, here, here's the thing.

[12:37] What I said is, the book of Joshua has been a bit of, like, a, a, a battle, a battleground, where, when people want to make indictments, or accusations, or lay charges against the Christian God, and why they shouldn't be a Christian, and why Christianity is bad for you, often they go to the book of Joshua.

And there's a whole pile of things in Joshua that if they were making charges against God, because God's on trial, and they expect that when these charges are presented in court, God will be found guilty of being a very, very bad God. Either he doesn't exist because he's so bad, or if he does exist, he's so bad, we shouldn't worship him, we should turn our back on him, and run away from him. And there's a long list of charges, and people write books on the subject. So what I decided to do, because I want people to, I want you to be able to read the Bible for yourself. I want you to get, like, this text has a profound teaching about the, I'll explain the point in a moment, the infinite particularity of God's grace and mercy, and it has a profound teaching on how the Lord has provided means of grace for his people.

And if you get scandalized by this part, you're not going to hear that part. But what I can't do is, I can't do every week everything, and this might be a bit unsatisfying to you, but, like, you know, the first week I dealt with one of the things against the book, and the next week I dealt with another couple, and I'm just going to deal with them in narrative form. So part of the scandal of this text, I'm going to deal with next week and the week after, just because it continues in the next two weeks in different forms. And what I suggest is, if you have these, just write down, boy, George, you better deal with this, you better deal with it, that's good. And if I don't deal with it in the next week or two, come and speak to me or say, George, you never dealt with it, and I'll deal with it. I'm not trying to run away from anything. I've just decided to follow the narrative and pick just maybe one thing every week out of the different charges against it. So write it down.

And here, if you could put up the first point, I actually have three points today, or three subject headings for the sermon. And that is this, the scandal of the Lord's judgment.

The scandal of the Lord's judgment. Now, here's how the, here's, you know, we live by stories.

[15:03] We live by a series of stories. Part of what is problematic is often the different stories we live by. We have different scripts and narratives that we live by. And some of the times those narratives are contradictory. But one of the stories Canadians live by is this. Here's how, what life is about.

You live your life day by day. You try to be a good person. And you try to grab joy whenever you can, and you try to grab pleasure whenever you can, and you try to have the best time you can have, not in a really selfish, narcissistic way, but you grab life if you can. You get the best you can out of life, and you live that day by day, and then you die, and you go to a better place. Or then you die, and nothing else happens. And that's the story that Canadians live by.

And if I was to say that, it wouldn't matter if it was that Tim Hortons up there with a lot of street people, or as I've said before, because I'm closer to hip replacement than hip, wherever the hippest coffee place is, you could say that to people, and they would just nod their head. Like, it's just a commonplace story that Canadians live by. And the problem is that this text says that you're living in a fantasy, and I don't mean a fantasy novel, which are sort of really good, if you find a good fantasy novel. That's just a make-believe story that's not true. That the real story is that you live day by day, and different things happen, and you do different things, and then you die, and you meet the triune God face-to-face. That's the real story. That's the true story.

You die. And when you die, you meet the triune God face-to-face, and that meeting is inevitable and unavoidable. Now, some of you might say, well, I like my story better, George, and that's just your word for it, that my story is fantasy and your story is better. I would just say there's four very brief things to show why the Canadian story is both untrue and unsatisfactory, and contradicts other stories that you desperately want to be true. Four very brief reasons why the Canadian story is not true, and contradicts other things that you desire to be true, other stories that you tell yourself. The first one is that the Canadian story, practically speaking, ignores death.

Because the average Canadian does not believe they're going to die. Death is an option that I will never choose. Because who would choose it? And I catch this because, you know, I hang out at coffee shops, and one of the ways I bear witness to Jesus is I'm just honest about what I've just done, or what I'm about to do. Like, this is a very easy way for you to bear witness to Jesus. Like, on Monday morning, if somebody said, what do you do on the weekend? Why didn't you say, well, you know, you know, my best friend and I, we went for a run Saturday morning, and then on Sunday morning, we went, I went to church, and then on Sunday afternoon, I had some people over for a meal. Like, why skip the church bit? So, I don't do that many funerals, but over the years, I might have gone to one of my favorite coffee places to get a coffee, either before or after I've done a funeral.

[18:16] And they'll say to me, oh, what have you been doing today? Or what are you about to do? And I'll say, I just took a funeral. I led a funeral. And without fail, they go like this, and say, that must be so hard. Without fail. Thousand percent. Like, they take a step back in shock, and they say, that must be so hard. That reveals that death is just an option, not inevitable.

And it also means they don't really believe they're going to go to a better place when they die. And the idea of non-existence is terrifying, not a comfort. The second thing about the Canadian story not actually being true is because one of the things that the Canadian story wants is that the Canadian story wants there not just to be apparent meaning, meaning, not just baubles, cheap, fake jewelry of meaning. They want real jewelry of meaning.

And the fact in the Canadian story that it ends with death destroys meaning. You can't really have meaning in life, not just apparent meaning, not just, I'm going to decide that this is meaningful. I'm just going to decide that this makes me happy. People want more than that. They want actual, real meaning. They want to touch real meaning, connect to it, and be at one with it, and at home with it.

That's what we want. But if it's, in fact, you just go through life choosing the things you choose, trying to be a good person, then you die, that actually means there is no meaning. And how do we know that? If the Lord has not blessed you with children, every parent with children, or if you have nephews and nieces, or great nephews and great nieces, you have probably seen this played out. [20:02] You go to visit somebody at their house. The four-year-old makes a very, very, very nice tower of bricks. The two-year-old waits till it's really nice and high and knocks it over. That's what two-year-olds do. And by the way, it could be the six-year-old with the tower, and then the four-year-old. It's what the younger sibling does. And what does the four-year-old do?

Ah! That two-year-old has just destroyed that beautiful castle that I've just made. You know, why did I bother doing it if they just break it all the time? What's the worth of doing anything if Sally or John just... No meaning if everything crumbles at the end.

We know that at the bones. We just don't want to think about it. You see, the third thing is the Canadian story. We really do desire meaning and goodness and something connected to transcendence. We want to connect with something that isn't just sort of fleetingly that we just, you know, me and my buddies or me and my wife decide, yes, this will be meaningful to us, like no matter what it is. And we just say that's going to be a next week a different thing. And that's not real meaning. We want something. We want to touch the real. We want to touch something which is

transcendent. We want to touch something that is eternal, something that is bigger than us and is good and beautiful. And we want to touch that in some way and have that somehow connected to us. And that's what we want to do. And if we want something which is really good and truly good and not just my opinion and not just my culture and not just right now and not just because Instagram influencers or TikTok influencers have convinced me that this is good. If we want something like that that is outside of us, then that will judge us. It can't be real and transcendent without also judging us. But then you might say, well, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, George. We're going to talk a little bit about why it should, but it has to come against us. It has to be something that we are not and therefore can stand in a sense, which I'll explain in a moment, and some type of judgment against us. And then this leads us to the final reason now why we're starting to see, you see, when the Bible here is talking about God's judgment, it's just fitting with what we want, that we will meet before. This story, in a sense, gives us a foretaste of what will happen to all human beings. Because you see that the Canaanites, in some ways, this is a bit of a preview for the next couple of weeks. In some ways, the story of the book of Joshua isn't a story about the people of Israel entering the promised land. That's the secondary truth. The primary truth is God's judging the Canaanite people. The Canaanite people had a horrific culture. Child sacrifice, child sacrifice, bestiality, sex trafficking. The parent might give their daughter to the priest or the temple, and the decision would be made either to kill that baby or to wait a few years, and then she could be put out for part of ritual sex. It was a horrendous culture that God is judging. [23:24] And so, this story, you're going to see it especially next week and other weeks, but even in this story, which I'm going to show you more in a moment, the average Canadian, when they think about good and evil, and we live in a very judgmental moment in our culture right now, where we want the bad people to be judged.

But that's how we say, we want the bad people to be judged. And the implication is, I am the good person, and there's those other bad people. There's those bad people who, you know, who vote for Trump, or the bad people who like Carney, or like whatever it is. There's the bad people out there, the woke, there's the anti-woke, whatever it is. And that's how we tend to think. But if you really think, but the fact of the matter is, the Bible reveals that the line between good and evil isn't a line between people. It isn't a line between tribes. It isn't a line between political parties. It isn't a line between nations. It's not a line between us and Russia, or anything like that. The line between good and evil goes down the center of me. And if it goes down the center of me, then I am going to be judged when I meet the true and living God.

You see, if you're going to have real good, with real meaning, and then have real life, you need to have a real God. And that real God will judge you.

Now, people might push back and say, I think you're, and that's why, by the way, I said that what is at the heart of this story's shock, apart from a little bit about the killing, which I'm going to talk about next week and the week after. Okay, I'm not going to get into that right now.

[25:05] But behind that shock is another different heart question, which is, as I put as the first thing, the scandal of the Lord's judgment. But some of you might say, George, you know, whenever I hear people like you talk about stuff like this, I think there's a little bit of a sniff, a little bit of a whiff that you think that you're better than me. Even if you talk about this line between good and evil within you, I always think people who say stuff like that and about God's judgment, they actually don't think that it's right down the center. They really think this little end of my pinky on my left hand is the evil part and the rest of me is good. That's how people like you talk when you say that.

You don't really mean it. And sometimes, by the way, when people sense that, it's because that's actually what people think. Christians can be horrifically self-righteous, horrifically self-righteous. And I'm not going to deny it. I'm sure there's been many times in my life I've been horrifically self-righteous. One of the things which is a real theme in my prayer, and it's a theme in my prayer because how bad I am, not because of how good I am, is that I will stop noticing specks in other people's eyes and notice the log in my own eye more. And I don't pray that because I think I'm so good, just so you know. And I'm not telling you that to show you that I'm really good. Like, that's the whole devil thing, and you do that to do that. Anyway, just shut up, devil. There's my issue. But I guess all I would say to that is, yes, that is a problem, but this story is going to point to something different. You see, what we're sensing when we feel uncomfortable with this story is, the fact is, you need goodness to be real and true if you're going to have some meaning in your life that you can connect to real goodness, you can connect to real justice. But we have a sense that if there

was just goodness and justice, then we're somehow in trouble, and it's not enough. They can be necessary, but they're not sufficient. For those of you who know that philosophical distinction, we need something more if God is going to actually be good and beautiful. And this story shows that more. It shows how good and beautiful the triune God is. And it comes in the very next four verses. Turn with me to verses 22 to 25.

And it goes like this, But to the two men who had spied out the land, and that's in Joshua chapter 2, Joshua said, Go into the prostitute's house and bring out from there the woman and all who belong to her as you swore to her. So the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. And they brought all her relatives and put them outside the camp of Israel. And they burned the city with fire and everything in it, only the silver and gold and the vessels of bronze and of iron they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day because she hid the messengers from Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. And it's not because she did that, but because what that indicated about her. But here's the point of the story.

[28:40] In Joshua chapter 2, I said it's very interesting that before you get into all of the other accusations that people are going to make about the God of Israel, you have actually a choice of two ways of approaching the story right in the second chapter. And in the second chapter, Rahab actually comes across these, the world's most completely incompetence, spies, inept, incompetent, hopeless spies. And she's going to have to rescue them. And she says, I and everybody in this whole complete region have heard about these multiple miracles, about the crossing of the Red Sea, about the miracles in defeating Og and Bashan. We've heard of all these things. Everybody's heart, everybody has a sense of your presence and is terrified. And her response to hearing about this miracle is she finds out that the miracle is true. And she casts herself on God's mercy. She throws herself on the Lord's mercy. She said, these miracles show that the Lord really does exist. All the gods, the gods that we sacrifice our daughters and our sons to, and that lead us to do horrific things. These aren't, can't be the real God. The real Lord has revealed himself. And I want to cast myself on him for his mercy. And the Lord takes her. Now we have this on steroids, because it's not just people hearing story. Nothing in the book of Joshua is going to make sense if you scrub out the miracles. You scrub out the miracles, nothing makes sense. It's filled with things which are contradictory. But you keep the miracles right at the heart of the text. And this story about the falling of the wall of Jericho. It's written in a historical narrative, not make-believe language, not once upon a time language. It's not metaphor. It has a metaphor, but it's a metaphor from a truth and other types of big truths from something which actually happened. And now they've seen, and even they've seen with their own eyes or heard with their own eyes, and even a miracle, that the triple miracle of how the people of Israel got across the Jordan. God puts up a block that stops the river from flowing past this point. That's the first miracle. The second miracle is it doesn't just rise up like it would with a normal dam, but it rises up way downstream. And the third miracle is that the ground is completely dry, and they're able to cross over. And they all see that, and they all know that. And that is why the city is walled up, and they're all protected. Rahab, I mean, it doesn't tell you.

It might have been that only Rahab could have gotten three people in the day before the Jordan stops. But after that, her house is bursting at the seams. You see, repentance is always an option. Like, why is it that the king responds to such a remarkable miracle and says, whoa, I am going to fight that Lord. I'm going to try to shut him out of my life. I'm going to show him who's boss. Why that response? Like, how is that reasonable? So here's the point. You could put up the second point. The second point is the Rahab story shows the infinite particularity of the Lord's mercy and grace. The infinite particularity of the Lord's mercy and grace.

Why did they lock up? Why did they not just say, why did the king not say, whoa, whoa? The gods that I sacrificed my daughters to, so they will either be raped or murdered, they can't be real. This proves that the Lord is real. Maybe he'll take me. Maybe he'll be merciful.

Now, you might say you can't prove that this is true, and that's completely correct. I can't prove that it's true. But what I can say is this, that in the context of profound wisdom and beauty, the most beautiful story is the real story that our individual stories can be part of.

[33:04] And that most beautiful story is that God, the Son of God, the one who could name every single star by name and name every comet by name and could tell you how many hairs you have on your head and knows you in the very depths of your being, that God, the Son of God, out of love

for you and desire that you would not suffer judgment, set aside as glory and splendor and divine prerogatives and remaining fully God, enter into our human story as a zygote in the womb of Mary, a 16-year-old girl living in the outskirts, the ne'er-do-well or the not-very-well-off part of the promised land. And he lived a fully human life and suffered trials and temptations. He would have had to have buried his father. Who knows how many of his children died shortly after childbirth that he had to help his mother as she cried and as they were buried. And he suffered trials and temptations that we suffer only without sin. And he came completely and utterly to die upon a cross. And he died upon the cross. And because he was man and because he was

God, his death is that infinite particularity. It is that one moment that all the strands and the promises of the stories of the Old Testament to be holy, to have that God will have mercy on his people.

And Rahab and Joshua wouldn't understand exactly how it is that God could, in love and justice, still show infinite mercy. They won't know how that is. All they could do is hope that the one who could make the Jordan River stop is also a God of mercy and that he would sort it out.

And it is in the infinite particularity of Jesus that the revelation is made as to how that has happened. So that when he dies on the cross, in a sense, you know, devoted to destruction, a Christian, a Christian should hear this. Jesus left God, the Son of God, left heaven's glories, naming every star, keeping as God, taking on into himself as our human nature. And he himself devoted himself to be destroyed. The Holy Spirit, God the Father, the three persons of the Trinity working together out of love for you and me. And he came to set himself aside to be destroyed.

And his destruction was not for anything that he had done. He takes into himself the destruction that I deserve, that I might have the love and grace and mercy and beauty and love and holiness and union with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit that I do not deserve, that I can receive that as a gift because he took my place. And that is the most beautiful story that's ever been told. And it's true.

[35 : 59] There is remarkable evidence for the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Remarkable evidence. And given that every single person will die, why would you not want to know what that evidence is?

And if the evidence is, in fact, strong, why wouldn't you want to actually know the one who has defeated death? And that would cause death. Why wouldn't you want to give yourself to him and to know his infinite mercy and grace? Why would you or anybody see the evidence and become like the walled city of Jericho locked up to shut it out? Like, why? Why did I do it for such a long time? I don't know the answer to that.

There's a mystery to rebellion against God that cannot be understood. All I can tell you is I am so glad that by the power of the Holy Spirit I came to that point in time where I cast myself upon the mercy of Jesus and asked him to become my Savior, my Lord. And that is just a mystery of grace for which I am very thankful.

And I hope you know that mystery of grace too. There's another bit just after about the, which I'm not going to get because I want to say a couple of things about the means of grace, which is my third point. If you could put up the third point, which is that the Lord's provision of the means of grace. The Lord's provision of the means of grace. So I mean, the big thing from this story is to come to Jesus. That's the big, the big thing, to give yourself to Christ alone. But the, you can ask me over coffee time about the last two verses for it. But what is the means of grace, the Lord's provision of the means of grace? So here's what it is. It's not the Lord's provision of magic. It's not the Lord's provision of technique. It's the Lord's provision of the means of grace. So if, I mean, we have lots of people who are fentanyl or opioid addicts who are in this neighborhood. And if we were just to stand outside, and I was to give people fentanyl, the second they have the fentanyl, they'd have the effect of fentanyl immediately in their bodies.

It just instantly affects them. There's a, like a physical, biological connection between the substance and what happens to bodies. But it's not like that with the means of grace. And this story illustrates it. So just so you know, the Israeli military does not decide that it's going to encircle Gaza seven times, blowing trumpets on the seventh day to defeat them. I know that's a complicated thing, but whatever. Russians don't do it with Ukraine. Ukraine can't do it against Moscow.

[38 : 43] Like it's not, it doesn't work. Circling around a place seven times doing this doesn't accomplish anything other than people thinking you're really weird. And using it as an opportunity probably to kill you if you're in a war. Like it doesn't work. It makes no sense. Okay, but so what's a

means of grace? A means of grace is when God asks you to do something. And you do it. And he gives grace.

That's what a means of grace is. So I'll just give you three very brief examples. So one of them is that God asks that we take communion. And communion isn't just the power of me to think about God and have holy thoughts. Boy, if it's just that, I mean, to my, some of my friends who think that's all communion is, I just, I mean, I suck at that. I'm not very good at it. You know, but the Lord has asked that we receive the Lord's communion, that we remember what he's done. We have to remember.

But when we take him in, in the context of worship, that the Lord feeds us spiritually. That's why the liturgy says that we feed on him spiritually in our hearts. And he actually feeds us.

And it's not just if you just go out and throw out wafers to everybody who wanders by, they're going to get something. No, that's, you see, the means of grace is that when you obey what Christ has done, he does something in your life. He feeds you spiritually. A second example would be Bible reading. Literacy is a great thing. We should be very unconcerned about literacy rates falling in our country. Literacy is a really, really good thing. Ultimately, literacy is a gift of the biblical faith because the Bible upholds reading and reading and using your mind and thinking. But just merely reading, I mean, it can't change you and give you new ideas. But the Bible, the God says, if you read my word and pray, I will do something in your life. I will do something spiritually. That's a means of grace. And the third one is, is you could just give money away. And maybe you give money away and you might feel good about it afterwards or, you know, something like that. I mean, the financial people would say, yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, you could give a little bit of money to charity. You get a little bit of a break. But if you actually invested in these stocks of money, you'll actually get more money.

So, like, it's not necessarily a very good financial strategy or anything like that. But what the Bible says is that, you know, you want to go spiritually. One of the ways you go spiritually is by giving of money to the church and to the care of the poor and the furtherance of the gospel. You do that and God spiritually, something changes spiritually in you. These are all means of grace. Means of grace are doing what the Lord asks you to do and doing it trusting that he's not doing it to hurt you. He's not doing it to belittle you. He wants to give you grace.

[41:39] He takes no delight in the death of a sinner. He wants every sinner to come to know the Savior. He wants every person who comes to know the Savior to grow in godliness. And he wants both each individual Christian and each church to walk in the beauty of holiness. And for that, be Christ blessed and the means of grace. I invite you to stand.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that from heaven Jesus came and sought us, that we might be his holy bride, that we who are loveless might loved and lovely be. We give you thanks and praise that he crossed that infinite divide from us to you, that we might be yours. And we ask, Father, that the beautiful story, the truth of the gospel, might more and more be deeply true in our lives and shape how we understand ourselves and the world around us. And we thank and praise you, Father, whether it's baptism or the Lord's Supper or Bible reading or financial generosity towards the church and the gospel or other different means of grace, assembling together in small groups, the means of grace of teaching to all those means of grace, Father. We ask, Father, that you help us to embrace them and to practice them and use the discipline, knowing, Father, that as we trust you and as obey you and as we do your word, that you will bless us, that you will draw us close to yourself, that you will make us more right with you, that we might live a life that is good and true and beautiful for ourselves, for the good of this city and for your glory. So, Father, may you move deeply within us and we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour and all God's people said, Amen.

Amen.