

Christ and Violence

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[0 : 00] Grab your Bibles, turn to the book of Joshua, and then get your fingers ready because we're going to be all over this morning. Topics that affect us, topics we are living in and around.

We've talked about work. We've talked about homosexuality or sexuality. We've talked about marriage and family. And so this morning, the topic this morning is violence.

And it's one of those topics where you could just go in a hundred different directions on it. I could preach about how violent our world is, or I could preach about how we should be pacifists.

Okay, not really, but that could come out. I can talk about so many different things. And I was surprised at where I was led in my studying this week.

Before we get to the book of Joshua, there is reason to be concerned about our lives and how much we subject ourselves to violence.

[1 : 25] We fill our brains with so much needless violence, like video games and TV and movies, that we have become numb to many types of violence.

For example, in Syria, since March of last year, at least 17,000 people have died. At least 17,000 people. That's at least 100 people a month have died during what the Red Cross is calling a civil war.

Refugees are fleeing the violence by thousands. Now, there's a little bit of numbness there for me, and I would imagine a lot of you in this room. One, because, well, that's the other side of the world. That doesn't really affect us. That's kind of a bummer. But two, because people dying, we see all the time. We see it on a TV show. We see it not just on primetime.

Kids watching TV shows where people are dying, and it affects our lives. People around the world are fleeing violence. They're fleeing this danger.

[2 : 30] But here in America, we're buying it up. In 2010, Call of Duty Black Ops sold \$360 million worth of video games in the first 24 hours.

In less than a month, they sold over a billion dollars. If you don't know what this game is, it's a first-person shooter game. You blow people's heads off. You walk through, and it's war. Well, we're playing these games.

At the movies this summer, saw a trailer for a new video game coming out. I think the new Call of Duty game coming out this fall. It's all around us. Big, big money.

And it's causing a numbness in us and in our future generations. Next thing you know, theater shootings will happen in Colorado will happen on a more regular basis.

Now, you think that's kind of extreme, but follow down the rabbit hole, you see where you end up. This numbness that we all have, some level of numbness, affects even our theology as we sit here this morning.

[3 : 38] Affects what we think we know about God, what we believe about God. It can affect how and what we preach, what we teach, what we read.

Are the stories true? Did God really do that? Did those people really get wiped out just like that? We question things. It affects what we share with people.

Now, these stories, that's a little outrageous. I'm not going to share that. It can affect what we believe about God. God is a God. He's a loving God. He's not a killer of innocent people.

This numbness to violence gives reason to be concerned for all of us in this room, not just me standing up here as I've thought through this this week. So this morning, I want for all of us to see how God uses violence in the Bible.

Now, I can't show every story. We're just going to hit four or five of them. And to see for what purpose He uses violence. Familiar stories and not so familiar stories.

[4 : 46] And then I want to look to Jesus, our Savior, and see how He endured the greatest of all acts of violence. And look at it with hopefully a much less numbness.

Look at it with new eyes to see the violence that He endured. So let me pray for us. You got your fingers in Joshua. That's where we'll start.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, gracious Lord, God, help us this morning to hear from You.

Help us to see Your Word alive. Help us to see how You work, even through violence, and You use it for Your kingdom. God, help us to see with new eyes, with just new perspective, the cross and what Jesus, our Savior, endured for us.

God, I want to make the truth known, Your Word proclaimed. Use me this morning. Let me not lean on my own understanding, but let me lean on You and trust in You this morning.

[6 : 04] Speak through me. Let us all hear a word from You. Be gracious to us in that and let our hearing lead to action. Let our hearing lead to a greater perspective on violence itself, but on Christ and what He has done and endured for us.

I pray this in the great, wonderful, and mighty name of Jesus. Amen. In the book of Joshua, we have a story that is familiar to all of us, I would imagine.

The story of Jericho. And if you don't know the story, we'll just read the first seven verses of chapter 6. So Joshua chapter 6, we'll read through. It kind of gives us a setup of what will occur and then we'll turn to the end of the chapter.

Joshua chapter 6, verse 1. Now 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 hand with its king and mighty men of valor. You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once.

[7 : 21] Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of a ram's horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times and the priests shall blow the trumpets and then when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout and the wall of the city will fall down flat and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.

So Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests and said to them, Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark of the Lord. And he said to the people, Go forward, march around the city and let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord.

So the Lord commanded them to march around the city of Jericho seven times. Six days, seventh day, they're below the horn, everybody's going to shout and God was going to deliver Jericho.

We'll skip down to verse 21. The wall has crumbled down. What God has said would happen, happened. And verse 21 says, 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 this is a familiar story to all of us almost probably in this room. Our kids know this story. It's a good story. But it's not just a story. It really did happen. And it shows us three things.

[8 : 50] God shows us three things through this act of violence. He shows His power. The walls of Jericho tumbled to the ground. No explosions, no artillery.

God in His hand knocked it over. There's not a day that goes by where I don't hear Jed yelling, talking about how LJ is tearing apart his Lego creation.

They just come through like Godzilla and knock it over or take it with his hands and just break it apart. That's what God did to the walls of Jericho. With His fingers, with His hands, He just knocked it over.

The walls tumbled down. God showed His power through this violent act. The people of Jericho suffered a violent end under God's hand and God's rule.

But not only do we see God's power, we also see God's faithfulness. verse 2. It says, See, I have given Jericho into your hands. This is God speaking.

[9 : 50] And it's as if God is going back to chapter 1 in Joshua where He tells Joshua in verse 9, Have I not commanded you?

Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened. Do not be dismayed. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. It's almost God saying, Look, I've done this.

I will do this for you. And look, I have delivered Jericho to you. So we see God's faithfulness. But we also see God's plan through this act of violence. The people of Israel were God's people set apart.

God chose them, made them, set them apart, said, This is my people. I am their God. And He set them apart and said, That you have this land that I will deliver to you. And what does He do? He delivers that land to the people of Israel. So God displays and shows His plan. Sets apart the people of Israel using this act of violence.

[10:54] So it's violence used by God to show His power, His faithfulness, and His plan. Turn to Genesis chapter 19. We also, we have a horrifying account of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Cities where fire came down from heaven and destroyed the city. The cities. So Genesis chapter 19, verse 23 through 29.

The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zor. Zor was the city that the angels of God told him that he could go to.

Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And He overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the city and what grew on the ground.

But Lot's wife behind him looked back and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley and he looked and behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

[12:10] So it was that when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah. In chapter 18 we get kind of a reason why. Chapter 18 verse 20 Then the Lord said, Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me and if not, I will know.

So because of Sodom and Gomorrah's sin, wickedness, God rains down fire from heaven and destroys these two cities. God uses violence to show His judgment.

This is a repeated theme throughout Scripture. God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah and more specifically on sin itself. Another story not so familiar.

Another way that God uses violence. Let's turn to 2 Kings chapter 2. The reason you're going to turn here and I'm going to read it is because it is not familiar. I guarantee you there's only a few people in here that may even know this story because we joke about it.

[13:33] I've been encouraged to teach my kids about this story. In 2 Kings chapter 2. By the way, I've been encouraged by somebody who doesn't have kids to teach this story.

So, verse 23. 2 Kings chapter 2 verse 23. He, being Elisha, went up from there to Bethel.

And while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him saying, Go up you bald head! Go up you bald head! And he turned around and when he saw them he cursed them in the name of the Lord.

And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore 42 of the boys. From there, he went on to Mount Carmel and from there he returned to Samaria. Not very often do I stand up here and say this, but what?

Really? She-bears come out of the woods and tear up 42 boys because they mocked Elisha. God uses violence to show that God's hand is on a specific person, that God's power is on a specific person.

[14:45] He shows Elijah was the prophet before Elisha. And Elisha had power. He's the one who mocked the priests of the idol gods, the gods of Baal.

He mocked them and he had this great power. But Elisha was to replace Elisha. And so God using His power, using Elisha to curse these boys, showed His power and showed that this is my prophet, this is my messenger.

He is mine. So God uses violence to show His hand on a specific person. David is another example of this. Turn to 2 Samuel. 2 Samuel, and we're almost done flipping through Bible drill this morning. But this is actually kind of fun if you ask me. 2 Samuel chapter 23. We have an account of David's mighty men.

2 Samuel 23 verse 8. These are the names of the mighty men whom David had. Hoseboshabath.

[16:03] I totally botched that, but that's okay. I tried really hard this week. And I'm not even going to say this next word. A Tecumonite, I guess I'll try. He was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against 800 whom he killed at one time.

That's pretty violent. This guy killed 800 people, 800 guys, 800 soldiers with one spear at one time. Look down to verse 10.

Eleazar. And next to him, verse 9, among the three mighty men was Eleazar, the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle and the men of Israel withdrew.

He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary and his hand clung to the sword. And the Lord brought about a great victory that day and the men returned after him only to strip the slain.

Now you say, well these are just two guys. The first guy killed 800 with a spear. Well that's pretty violent if you ask me. The second guy fought until there was no strength left in his body.

[17:10] He could not remove the sword from his hand. He had no strength to move his fingers from the grasp of the sword. But verse 10 tells us that the Lord brought about a great victory that day they fought for David.

They fought for the Lord. Proved that David was God's man. Showed that David was God's anointed king. God's chosen king and God's power and might was shown through some of these violent circumstances.

New Testament. John chapter 2. Another story that is familiar to you. John chapter 2 we have an act of violence from Jesus himself.

Jesus in the temple. Jesus walks into the temple and he sees that the temple has been turned into a marketplace. People were buying and selling and bartering and gambling and all sorts of things and Jesus goes and he makes a whip and he goes in and he overturns tables.

He gets angry. He has this righteous anger towards the people. See, Jesus fought with righteous anger for truth.

[18:27] He fought for righteousness and he used violence. We're going to end with Jesus. Flip back to Psalm chapter 22.

God uses violence for so many different things. We could just go on and on and on with this game this morning. But I want to end here.

That God uses violence to show redemption. To show our redemption. And before we go any further I want to read what Charles Spurgeon says about this chapter.

I can't say it any better. He says, it is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours.

The record of his dying words. The lachrymatory of his last years. The memorial of his expiring joys.

[19:35] David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense. But as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David.

Before us we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the cross. The sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow.

O for grace to draw near and see this great sight. We should read reverently putting off our shoes from off our feet as Moses did at the burning bush for if there be holy ground anywhere in scripture it is in this song.

This is where we head. As I read Psalm 22 listen to the language feel the pain and the anguish let the numbness towards violence be removed we approach holy ground verse one my God my God why have you forsaken me why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning oh my God I cry by day but you do not answer and by night but I find no rest yet you were holy enthroned on the praises of Israel in you our fathers trusted they trusted and you delivered them to you they cried and were rescued in you they trusted and were not put to shame but

I am a worm and not a man scorned by mankind and despised by the people all who see me mock me they make mouths at me they wag their heads he trusts in the Lord let him deliver him let him rescue him for he delights in him yet you are he who took me from the womb you made me trust you at my mother's breasts on you was I cast from my birth and from my mother's womb you have been my God be not far from me for trouble is near and there is none to help many bulls encompass me strong bulls of Bashan surround me they open wide their mouths at me like a ravening and roaring lion I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint my heart is like wax is melted within my breast my strength is dried up like a pot shirt!

[22:37] me in the dust of death for dogs encompass me a company of evildoers encircles me they have pierced my hands and feet I can count all my bones they stare and gloat over me they divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots but you oh Lord do not be far off

oh you my help come quickly to my aid deliver my soul from the sword my precious life from the power of the dog save me from the mouth of the lion you have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregations I will praise you you who fear the Lord praise him all you offspring of Jacob glorify him and stand in awe of him all you or aboard the affliction of the afflicted and he has not hidden his face from him but he has heard when he cried to him from you comes my praise in the great congregation my vows

I will perform before those who fear him the afflicted shall eat and be satisfied those who seek him shall praise the Lord may your hearts live forever!

Now because of time and because of depth of what is in this chapter I'm only going to look at a few verses we're going to go through verse 12 through 18 and as I read Spurgeon say sure there may be David's suffering modified in this text but when the star disappears because of the brightness of the sun nobody would read this and say and look to David they'll look to

Jesus and see Jesus in this text so let's let's go verse 12 many bulls encompass me strong bulls of Bashan surround me the leaders the Jewish leaders the religious leaders surround him in this time of suffering they mock him in this time they rule guilty judgment with their eyes hate pours from them their eyes scream death to you their eyes penetrate and say die hopelessness violent hopelessness here for our savior verse 13 they open wide their mouths at me like a ravening and roaring lion mocking hate firing from their mouths grenades of insult and fire being launched and thrown at them at him like lions waiting to devour to see this to the end waiting for that moment starving and hungry lions waiting to devour his flesh their hate devours every bit of life violence from their mouths violence in their being there verse 14

I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint my heart is like wax it is melted within my breast brokenness and pain he is utterly spent he is like water being poured out onto the earth onto the dry earth like a fountain of tears his heart no longer has firmness this act of being nailed and hung on a cross the jarring of placing the cross in the ground could have been enough just to dislocate his bones violent violent death he is in excessive debility he is in intense pain when it talks about heart here he is not talking about the organ that beats blood he is talking about who and what makes him who he is his inmost life feels like wax melted by fire he is melting away under such suffering and violence this is violent

[28 : 03] Spurgeon says the fire of almighty wrath would have consumed our souls forever in hell it was no light work to bear as a substitute the heart of an anger so justly terrible Jesus endured this suffered this his heart melting away what heart can endure when God deals with them in his wrath no heart can endure verse 15 my strength is dried up like a pot shirt and my tongue sticks to my jaws you lay me in the dust of death our Lord is done he can take no more he is complete debility the picture here is portrayed as a piece of clay a piece of pottery that has been cooked and baked in fire or under the sun until no moisture exists in it completely and utterly dried up completely fired our suffering servant thirst and fever fastened his tongue to his jaw there's no moisture that exists a dryness like nothing we have experienced so tormented!

part of his body has escaped the agony of our redemption The tongue has clinged itself to the jaw he wrestles no more with death he says lay me in the dust of death it's a humiliation for the son of God this is our savior verse 16 for dogs encompass me a company of evildoers encircle me they have pierced my hands and my feet like hungry ravenous unclean dogs howling around a potential meal people surround our Lord you go hunting you hunt with dogs the dogs surround whatever it's hunting this is birds sometimes you go with a lot of dogs hunting birds and they surround so if it's a deer they surround the deer and they close in slowly this picture here is of men closing in waiting for this and instead of a deer in the center it's a fainting bleeding man men who have waiting for his doom waiting for this to be over this is one of those examples one of these verses here there is no way this is talking about

David no way verse 17 I can count all my bones they stare and gloat over me so empty from his fasting and his suffering that says he could see his bones and he could count the bones now his his stature on the cross could very well cause his bones all to protrude and he could count them and see them the people glared at him and glared at his nakedness and saw him so our savior is enduring shame now as well the people still poison and hate is hurled at him now the first Adam made us all naked therefore the second

Adam became naked that he might clothe our naked souls so we see is this redemption through what Jesus endured in verse 18 they divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast

lots another one of those texts another one of those verses that says to readers this is not about David David may have wrote this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit may have been guided by God but in God's power this is about Jesus on the cross in those darkest last moments even at the foot of Christ even underneath the cross where blood is dripping on their backs men are gambling men are committing the very sin and sins that he was dying for the work of the cross to these men had no value so he endured shame and he is enduring the fact that according to these men there is no value in what he is doing he is just dying

Jesus was emptied physically and spiritually just meat and bones a violent death a violent death that no one will ever see again now it's pretty heavy and I may have bored you and I hope I didn't I hope you see the violence here and I hope that numbness whatever level has disappeared because there's going to be a time in your life as a Christian there's going to be a time a place a moment where you're going to be faced with a decision are you going to fight for truth are you going to fight for justice are you going to fight for God's glory or are you not are you going to be men and women of violence or are you not will you see that moment or will you still be numbed to it and that's my fear with the amount of violence we take in we will not see the violence on the cross will not be violence it's just a story if you're a

[34 : 37] Christian in here then your model is Jesus right your model is Jesus he has modeled the life for us that! we should strive to live so then we must fight for truth then we must fight injustice we may be asked to die a violent death for his glory we may be asked to be alone lonely and separated a violence on emotion and feeling as I've gone through this this week up and down week crazy week the numbness in me concerns me the numbness that's in me scares me the numbness that that my kids and your kids and your kids kids will have most likely scares me because the cross is violent the truth of redemption and what

Christ endured is violent and if it's not violent then it's just a story and I can make that logical that irrational and make irrational so Jesus' life death and resurrection in us can break the numbness because he endured to the end for us he endured to the absolute end so the numbness that we have the numbness that we keep getting from playing the video games and I am not going to be the legalistic guy up here and say you need to stop video games and watching our rated violent movies and no that's not my place but keep a perspective keep a view on the cross Jesus' suffering was so that we can fight for truth and for justice his suffering was so we can fight for his glory it's him in us and through us not us doing it it's him in us and through us so the question is not are you willing to fight are you willing to take a stand here it's not are you willing to go the you know just be the bad dude who's just going to fight for all injustice and against injustice and fight for truth no that's not the question the question the question is are you willing to let

Jesus fight in you and through you see then we can fight like Eleazar who fought until he couldn't anymore he fought with the sword in his hand that needed to be pried off he had no strength left we can fight till exhaustion but Jesus can fight till victory Jesus can fight to the end to completion!

So then we become men and women of violence for the kingdom and not because we play call of duty or because we play a violent sport or whatever is the numbness wearing off do you see what our savior endured or are you numb to all of this are you known to every bit of this is this just a story is this just words that are being spoken that goes in and out that's the question this morning see when David's mighty men killed the Philistines they killed the Philistines and that was part of God's judgment they were guilty when

Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed not just a story of fire coming down from heaven they were guilty of something they were guilty of sin and that sin and that guilt runs through your veins and it runs through mine we are all guilty this morning and our punishment what we deserve is death not not just an end not just dying and it's over not just game over but eternity and torment is what we deserve but Jesus endured a violent gruesome debilitating death for you and for me he made a way so that you and I would not suffer like he did he made a way he says in John chapter 14 I am the way the truth and the life no man comes to the father except through me he is the way to the father he made a way by taking the wrath upon himself instead of on us giving us access to the father your sin can be taken away as if you've never sinned before but not by how many church meetings you attend and not by how many prayers you make or how many times you've been baptized and not by how good you are but only through

[40 : 16] Jesus and his life violent death and his resurrection Jesus on the cross died for us so that we can be righteous so that we can be sinless believe in him trust to him this morning he is calling

now violence we can talk about it all day long I believe in this much violence I believe in this much this morning none of that matters this morning what matters is the violence that Jesus endured for you and for me what matters is that because of Jesus we can fight for things that are right that he can give us strength and the ability to fight for truth to fight for righteousness to fight for justice and it's not us doing it it's us being part of what he's doing in us and through us to the world so some of you in here may be called to

Afghanistan there's a family headed back some of you may be headed to China some of you may be headed to some war torn area in the Middle East Syria and are you willing to stand and fight for justice Jesus fought for justice God uses violence to show his power to show his redemption to show his faithfulness to show who he is will you be part of that will you be part of what he is doing this morning let's pray