Joshua 5:13-15 Discussion Questions

Read Joshua 5:13-15

1. Who is this mysterious figure that confronts Joshua?

* What clues does the text give you?
  + He accepts Joshua’s worship.
  + His presence makes it a holy place.
  + This encounter leads directly to God speaking to Joshua (6:2)
* What other biblical accounts does this remind you of or sound like?
  + Gen 18:1-21: Abraham is visited by God
  + Gen 32:22-32: Jacob wrestles with God
  + Ex 3:1-6: Moses speaks with God
* Compare and contrast them
  + Gen 18: Visitors appear who turn out to be the Lord and two angels. Also, Abraham’s conversation with these men quickly turns into a direct conversation with the Lord. God provides a promise.
  + Gen 32: This man with whom Jacob wrestles blesses and renames Jacob, and then Jacob believes him to be God.
  + Ex 3: God’s presence makes the ground holy. God shows up in a symbolic form. He commissions Moses to lead his people out of Egypt.
  + In both Gen 32 and Ex 3 God appears in a threatening or dangerous form.

*In light of the above, it seems that the commander of the Lord’s army is the Lord himself. There is another figure in the OT called the angel of the Lord who often shows up and speaks and acts in such a way that it seems like he is God. Then there is Gen 18 and 32 when God appears as a man. This appears to be the same kind of situation. The fact that he both accepts worship and his presence makes the site holy are strong indications that this is the case.*

2. What does the commander’s response in v. 14 mean? What question does it imply back to Joshua?

3. In Pastor Mike’s sermon, he spent a lot of time proving the point that God’s ultimate purpose for the things he does is his own glory.

* How does that idea strike you? It is unsettling, comforting, confusing?
* Why do you think you this affects you this way?
* Why is it wrong do to things for my glory and not wrong for God to do things for his? (This is a repeat of a question asked from last week.)

4. Why would the commander of the Lord’s army appear at this moment to the commander of Israel’s army?

5. What can we learn from Joshua’s response?

6. How do we respond when we are confronted with the fact that God’s agenda is his own and not ours?

7. Where are you currently struggling with trying to get God to support your plan, as opposed to submitting to his?

8. What happens to us when we live for ourselves and our own glory rather than his? To use Pastor Mike’s language, what happens when we serve lesser glories?

* How have you seen this play out in your life and the lives around you?

9. How should the lessons from this passage shape our prayers?

10. How should it shape our decision making process and our priorities?

Summary of Biblical Narrative Plot Points from Genesis to Joshua

* God creates a good world
* Man is created to rule God’s good world as His representative
* Man rebels by aligning himself with the rebel Satan and the result is the multiplication of sin which leads to an abundance of death and everything associated with it (suffering, sickness, fear, etc.).
* God promises that a son of Eve will one day make things right by crushing the serpent—God’s enemy—but in the process he would be wounded himself.
* Humanity becomes so corrupt that God starts over with Noah.
* God chooses Abram to become the father of his covenant people and makes promises to Abram (Abraham) that he would have numerous descendants, Palestine would be given to his descendants, and that the world would be blessed through them.
* The promise continues through Abraham’s descendants from Isaac to Jacob (Israel) down to his 12 sons, who become the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.
* God protects Israel and his sons from a devastating famine by moving them to Egypt.
* After hundreds of years of living in Egypt, the people of Israel become numerous and the Pharaohs enslave them.
* God appoints Moses to be his representative as he delivers his people from slavery in Egypt. God gives his people his law and leads them to the promised land so that he can fulfill his promise to Abraham. God’s purpose is that by living by God’s law, Israel will be “a nation of priests” representing God to the other nations, revealing his goodness and holiness. And that will draw the nations to God.
* The people rebel against God because they do not believe he can drive out the people who are currently living in the Promised Land, and so God rejects them.
* Joshua, Moses’ assistant, is one of the few who do not rebel against the Lord.
* All of that rebellious generation are doomed die wandering the desert. Their children will inherit the land.
* Even Moses fails in the desert and so he also dies in the desert.
* When Moses dies, Joshua becomes the new leader of the people of Israel.
* They enter the land by crossing the Jordan River (an echo of crossing the Red Sea).
* They are about to begin their conquest of the land by attacking Jericho.