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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
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Series: Courageous Living in a Dangerous World

10 Now Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had taken Ai and totally destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and that the people of Gibeon had made a treaty of peace with Israel and had become their allies. **2** He and his people were very much alarmed at this, because Gibeon was an important city, like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were good fighters. **3** So Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem appealed to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish and Debir king of Eglon. **4** "Come up and help me attack Gibeon," he said, "because it has made peace with Joshua and the Israelites." **5** Then the five kings of the Amorites—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon—joined forces. They moved up with all their troops and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it. **6** The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: "Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us."

7 So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. **8** The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." **9** After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. **10** The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel, so Joshua and the Israelites defeated them completely at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. **11** As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them, and more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites. **12** On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." **13** So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. **14** There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! **15** Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

16 Now the five kings had fled and hidden in the cave at Makkedah. **17** When Joshua was told that the five kings had been found hiding in the cave at Makkedah, **18** he said, "Roll large rocks up to the mouth of the cave, and post some men there to guard it. **19** But don't stop; pursue your enemies! Attack them from the rear and don't let them reach their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand." **20** So Joshua and the Israelites defeated them completely, but a few survivors managed to reach their fortified cities. **21** The whole army then returned safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, and no one uttered a word against the Israelites. **22** Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me." **23** So they brought the five kings out of the cave—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon. **24** When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks. **25** Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight." **26** Then Joshua put the kings to death and exposed their bodies on five poles, and they were left hanging on the poles until evening. **27** At sunset Joshua gave the order and they took them down from the poles and threw them into the cave where they had been hiding. At the mouth of the cave they placed large rocks, which are there to this day.

When is it that you feel most emboldened to ask God for a miracle? You feel kind of most like -- "God, I want you." Is it when you're in trouble? Like, you know, sickness or something like that? Is it when you're pinned in a corner? My guess is, it's not when you have failed. Like, you know, if you blew it on a Sunday, you dishonored God -- sinned -- I seriously doubt, for most of us, on Monday that's not the day where you wake up and you go for gold and ask God for the most

incredibly huge audacious miracle. That's probably not the way it goes. Unless you're Joshua. Because that's exactly what he did.

He made a mess of things. He did. He made an arrangement with his enemy. He did something that God asked him not to. God had given him parameters of the nations that he was not to make a covenant with. They were his enemies. He was to extract them, get rid of them, get them out of the way because they were pagan nations, and Joshua, the Scripture says, he trusted his sight, he trusted his senses, his taste, and he didn't seek the Lord and he got duped. And he made a covenant with a nation that he wasn't supposed to. And after that, he asked God for the most outlandish miracle in the world. He told God -- he said, "God, I want you to stop the sun square up in the middle of the sky, and I want you to stop the moon, and I want you to suspend both of them for 24 hours while we mop up this battle." Why? How? How would he ever have the courage to ask God on that kind of a day? Because I think for most of us, we might come to God when we've served well. We might come to God when we've been pretty obedient. We might come to God when, you know, when we've kind of studied the Scriptures and we're feeling good about ourselves, but -- seldom would we ever come to God when we have failed.

Not Joshua. After one of his worst moments, he asked for one of the most outlandish miracles in the world. Now, I don't know about you, but I believe in miracles. I believe God still does them. And I believe we still need them. I believe that we need God to intervene in our world. I think we need God to intervene in Ukraine. I believe we need God to intervene in Salem. I believe we need God to intervene not just in election seasons, but we need God to intervene all the time. And because of that, I'm interested in this text, because it speaks to us about how do we ask God, what is it like, what does it mean for me to ask God to intervene and to have the kind of boldness and the kind of relationship with God that I can ask Him to stop the sun in the middle of the sky. And it begins, interestingly enough, with our failure. What was it? Joshua decided to honor his word even if it meant defending his enemy. And that's what he chose to do. He understood that commitments are only good if they're backed up.

Now, not everyone does that. A lot of people make commitments. Sometimes they make commitments but they don't intend to back them up -- they make commitments when they're caught. Sometimes -- I remember a lady, she made a commitment to not gamble anymore. She got caught, and she was gambling all kinds of money. She was getting her paycheck, and she was spending it. She'd make her way down the road, down Highway 22, and spend as fast as she got it. And she got caught, and she and her husband and I had a conversation. But as soon as the dust settled, and as soon as kind of things settled, she kind of -- the pull was strong. And her commitment kind of waned after -- what? Things went back to normal.

Sometimes we make a commitment when we get caught. Sometimes we make a commitment when we're in trouble. We get in trouble, and sometimes people get in trouble when they get caught or, you know, they get caught seeing something on a screen, and all of a sudden, man, I'm telling you what, the wife is mad, you know, and so it's like, "I'll never watch that again. I'll put something on my screen, or I'll put something on my computer." And it's like, "I will make a commitment. I will never watch that kind of stuff again." And that lasts for a while. There's no internal change, there's no dramatic alteration of the heart. It's just a sin management technique. But the commitment only lasts for a little while. Sometimes the commitment is a leverage. I had a friend who leveraged God -- "God, I have a sin." It was a sin he struggled with for 20 years, and he tried to leverage God. "God, I will -- I will -- if you help me conquer this sin, then I will do this for you." Kinda like, "I'll serve you over here, God, if you will help me win this battle over here." So, it's not an uncommon thing. I see people do it all the time. "God, I'll give this over here if you help me win this over here." It's a leverage point. It didn't work. But Joshua knew that a word given needs to be a word fulfilled. And he knew that he needed to serve his enemy. His enemy was the Gibeonites.

Now, these were interesting people. I think they were kind of in some ways wise. The Scripture tells us that they were a royal nation; they were kind of high-class. What does that mean? Well, number one, they were larger than Ai. It means that they probably were a little richer than Ai. And at least we know for certain, because it says in the text, that they had a better military than Ai. These folks were -- they had better soldiers. And they had to be a little smarter. Why? Because even though they had better soldiers, they went to Joshua and said, "Hey -- God's with you. You fight. When you fight, God's with you and you win. So -- all of these nations are conspiring against us, and we are in trouble. And we're gonna get routed, because there's like five of them and there's one of us and we need you, because God's with you."

Now the question is -- why did Joshua sustain a victory? More importantly, why did he ask for a miracle and God responded "Yes"? I think, number one, is because he aligned himself with God's divine promises. He trusted God's divine promises. It says in chapter 10, verse 8 -- God was speaking to Joshua, and He says, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." Now, I understand some of you who read the Old Testament, you say, "Well Pastor, we don't have those divine promises, because this is the Nation of Israel and we're not the Nation of Israel, we're the church." You're right -- we don't have the divine promises, because we're not the Nation of Israel. But we have actually even better promises!

Remember in Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses, and you're gonna go to Jerusalem and Judaea and Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. And when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you're gonna have a power, and you're gonna share the gospel. And it's gonna spread like wildfire! And the Holy Spirit's gonna come upon YOU, and the

Holy Spirit's gonna go ahead of you, and this seed that is gonna come in you is also gonna convict people, and this gospel is gonna spread everywhere." I mean, Joshua -- you're just gonna defeat a nation! You have a divine power that is going to spread throughout the world! But the principle is still the same. If you want to walk in the power of God, if you want to see victory, if you want to see God do the miraculous -- Joshua says you've got to walk in His promise.

Paul says it this way in Galatians 5: If you want to bear fruit and you want to see the fruit of the Spirit, you need to keep in step with the Spirit. You need to walk in alignment with the Spirit. Paul says it this way in Ephesians chapter 5. He says, If you want to manifest the power of the Spirit you ought to be filled with the Spirit. You have to come under the full influence of the Spirit. It's really the same principle. Joshua says, "I want to walk in the authority or the promise of the Spirit." Why? Because he knows what it means when you don't. He had to do 36 death notifications. He had to knock on 36 doors and inform 36 wives, "Your husband died because we didn't take God's word seriously."

What does it look like when you walk in the promise of God? Notice verse 10. God routed them. The Lord chased them. The Lord struck them. The Lord sent hail upon them. If you want to see the miraculous, and you want to see God do the miraculous, it really begins before the prayer. Aligning your heart to say, "God, where are the promises that you've given to us, not only as individuals, as children of the living God, but also as the church? What are those things you've called us to? What are those things you've given to us?" One that I would give to you, that I would encourage you, or -- just look for all of the promises that are related to the Word of God. There are dozens of them. If you look at the Word of God, it will teach you, it will reprove you, it will make you wise, it will convict you, it will make you equipped for every good work. You want to be the best employee in the world, you want to see yourself experience promotions -- become a student of the Word of God. You want to ask God's blessing upon your life financially, then become a student of the Word of God, because it promises that very thing. When you move in alignment with the promises of God then you can invite the miraculous Spirit of God to advance your life. Because the Word of God promises that.

Secondly, Joshua moves next into what I call a developed faith-inspired strategy. God tells him, "I'm gonna give them into your hand." Now, they're in Gilgal. It's a 25-mile journey to Gibeon. When they were in Gibeon and they made that 25-mile journey, it took them three days the first time they made it. Remember? They had conquered Ai, and they were going up to Gilgal -- why did they go up to Gilgal? Because they wanted to reset themselves. They went up to Gilgal because that's where Moses gave his last speech. That was where they chiseled a new set of the ten commandments. That's where they kind of reset themselves as the Nation of Israel to say, "We're gonna walk with God, and this is how we're going to do it." And they were camped there, and they had built an altar -- it was their fourth altar. And they were kind of having some worship services. God comes to them. They

made a mistake, and now God says, "You need to go defend your enemy. And I'm gonna give them into your hands."

Joshua, it says, after an all-night March from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. So, God tells Joshua, "I want you to make your way to Gibeon." The first time he makes that journey, it takes him three days. God tells him, "Hoofail." Doesn't tell you that God says, "I want you to do it in three days." Doesn't tell you, "I want you to do it in a day." It seems to me that this is Joshua's deal. It seems to me that Joshua sits down with his soldiers and says, "This is what we're gonna do. Here's our strategy. We're gonna make this trip in a day. We're gonna catch them by surprise, 'cause we're gonna do it at night. Now, they're not gonna expect that we're gonna do this at night, because it's an uphill trek. And if you do this 25-mile uphill journey, they're not gonna expect that we're gonna fight them." Who's gonna do a 25-mile uphill journey and expect to fight? I don't know about you. After a 25-mile journey, all night long, I want breakfast. I don't wanna fight.

Now, you're gonna say, "Pastor, these guys -- I mean, they walk everywhere." I don't care. Twenty-five miles is 25 miles. Now, there's somewhere in the Christian life that we got this weird thing that we put together. And it sounds like this: "I need to get out of the way and let God do His thing." Somehow that's faith. Can I just suggest -- I don't see that in the Bible. Because in this text it seems to me, "I'm gonna give them into your hand," and Joshua marches 25 miles in the middle of the night to win this battle. It is a faith-inspired journey. He has to take it.

James says, "Faith without works makes no sense." A battle without a soldier is not gonna be a battle. If we're gonna see God do the miraculous and win this battle, I need a soldier. If we're gonna win this battle, you gotta ante up, Joshua! You gotta make the journey! Of course God is going to give them into your hands. And God does! He does the supernatural! He confuses them and he sends a bunch of hailstorms. But they still have to make the journey.

If we're gonna love this city and we're gonna see this city changed and come to Christ, you still have to share the gospel. If your neighbor's gonna come to Christ, God can save them without you, but He rarely does. He's gonna send a messenger. If God's gonna save your grandchildren and your kids, don't love Jesus. That's okay. But He's gonna send grandma and grampa. If God's gonna save this city, He's more likely than not gonna send us. We can ask for the miraculous and God can send a blimp and drop all kinds of tracts -- from Heaven. He just normally won't do that. He's gonna send us. And so, what I see in this is a faith-inspired strategy that puts together what I see in the Scriptures all the time. This marvelous faith that God has sent with a promise, and this soldier who's willing to march all night long -- 25 miles. Now, is God participating? Absolutely. He sends hail. Now, if you're from the Northwest, you think, "Hail? Really?" I mean, I grew up in the Northwest -- hail is usually the size of a pea. I mean, that's not even gonna kill an ugly cat.

When Kerri and I moved to Colorado, I was teaching one day, at the seminary, and we heard over the intercom. "Please go and get your automobiles. A hailstorm is coming. Get your automobiles under cover!" And I was like, "What? Hailstorm? Get your automobiles? What are they doing that for?" And everyone left. I mean, they didn't even ask permission. They just got up and ran out the door. I mean, what are you guys doing? I'm not done lecturing! Get back in here! They were gone. So, I decided, might as well go out. Everyone else is. My car was totaled. I didn't move it. Every window broken. I went out there -- I picked up a hail ball. It was the size of a baseball. I'm from the Northwest -- in the Midwest, God hails. He doesn't like the Midwest. He doesn't like automobiles in the Midwest. He doesn't like roofs in the Midwest. Our roof was totaled. Our trailer was totaled. Everything you have was totaled. The reality is, God kills people with hail! And He did.

This Scripture is amazing! More people were killed by hail than the sword! But the reality is, He still used the soldiers. Before the miraculous, before Joshua ever showed up and said, "God, stop the sun," He showed up. And before we ever ask God to do the miraculous -- and it's okay to ask; we're going to -- you gotta show up. And before you ever ask God to change this state -- and it needs the miraculous -- you gotta show up. And you have. And God puts together, and James says when you put faith together with works, when you put faith in God together with loving the poor, when you put faith in God together with loving your neighbor, and you invite God to do the miraculous, He shows up.

And that's where Joshua leads us to the next point. To pray a faith-inspired prayer. Joshua makes the crest, and he comes up, and he sees something that's amazing. His soldiers are routing the place, and the enemy is hightailing it out of there. And the text really doesn't tell us -- you have to read between the lines -- but it seems to me, as best as you can tell in this text, that Joshua looks at it, and for some reason comes to this conclusion: "We need to finish this today, God." And in fact, I think in some other situations, Joshua later discovers some moments where if you don't finish the job right, it comes back to get you. Goliath is an illustration. It's for another day. And Joshua decides, "God, we gotta finish this today." And he comes to the conclusion, "We don't have enough time." And he looks up to God -- "God, we have a job to do, but we don't have enough time. Stop the sun." One of the most outlandish prayers in the world. And God says, "Yup."

Now, look at all that has happened. Promise. March. Hail. And then bold prayer. But don't forget the failure. And I think that may be key. Because if I come to God on my strong days, then I'm more likely than not to trust my obedience. But if I come to God on the days of my failure, or the days when I'm not coming to Him with my obedience, then what am I trusting? I'm trusting my identity. I'm trusting the promise. Maybe that's what Paul means when he says, "I am discovering the joy of trusting my weakness. Boasting in my weakness. Because it's then I am experiencing Christ's power." When I am fully aware -- not of my obedience, not of my service, not that I'm a pastor -- but that I'm a child of the living God, that I am a product of grace, that I'm a recipient of the resurrection and the blood of Christ -- it

is in that moment, my friends, that I am participating with the miraculous God, and I am free to ask for the divine God to enter this world and do the glorious manifestation of His power. Why? Because I'm trusting it here.

Maybe the point of Joshua is -- on your worst day might be your most powerful day. The day where you make your worst covenant might be the day where God is saying, "You can ask me." Is that permission to fail? No. But it is a lesson. It's a lesson where Paul teaches us, "I'm learning to boast in my weaknesses. I'm learning to walk with a limp and not be embarrassed of it. I'm not trying to hide my shame, be afraid of my past. I'm becoming comfortable. I'm okay walking openly. Why? Because I've been bought. I've been bought with the blood of Christ." I'm no longer my own, the Scripture says. I've been bought with a price. Therefore honor God with my life. How do I honor Him? I ask for a miracle. "Please, Father, would you stop the sun? We have your work to finish today."

At the end of it -- V-Day -- Tommy was stuck with his troop, pinned in by a German artillery team. The Germans had complete advantage. They were absolutely sitting ducks. And Tommy whispered a prayer to the Lord: "God, the only way we're gonna live is if you do a miracle. The only way this entire platoon of 50 men is gonna live and ever see our families again is if you do a miracle." Joel was writing to his mom the story of that prayer, and he said, "Mom -- a fogbank rolled in between the two hills. And the platoon that we were in became completely covered and unrecognizable to the Germans. We escaped and we reorganized away from their sight. Before we took another step, we stopped and we asked Tommy, 'Would you lead us in thanks to God, who heard your prayers and sent a fogbank so that we could live.'"

My friends, this city needs some miracles. My guess is your life needs some. Now, I understand some of your unanswered prayers might be the very thing that says, "I don't know if I want to risk another miracle prayer." My guess is, Joshua had some, too. And so, you might have to ask yourself the question -- "Am I willing to risk it one more time?" And I say, yeah. Because when facing the impossible, you don't risk it because of your obedience. You risk it because of His grace. You don't risk it because you've served well. You risk it because of His blood. So don't be afraid to ask. You don't risk it because He's answered all your prayers. You risk it because He loves you. Don't be afraid to ask, because God's not done doing miracles. He hears the prayers of people.