

- I. Set Up
 - A. Intro
 - B. If you Google “second chances,” you get:
 - 1. A handful of stories about celebrities – whose careers were over because of a bad movie (John Travolta), or insider trading (Martha Stewart), or a really bad personal decision (Hugh Grant), or they jumped on Oprah’s couch (Tom Cruise) – you get my point. Someone had done something wrong and were supposedly washed up, but someone gives them a break, or they went on an apology tour, and they are back;
 - 2. And you also get a bunch of inspirational quotes by self-help authors, mostly about overcoming failure;
 - 3. And you get information about prison reform and work release programs.
 - 4. There is also information about bankruptcy laws.
 - C. Well, you might also get the Book of Joshua.
 - 1. It is not the only big “second chance” or “reset” we see in the Bible. There is, after all, the restart after the flood in Genesis 8, the restart after the Exile, Peter’s restart after denying Christ three times.
 - D. But Joshua would be prominent.
- II. As you may know:
 - A. Joshua is the sixth book of the Bible. It describes events unfolding around 3,500 years ago.
 - B. It opens with the announcement that Moses is dead and Joshua is now in charge.
 - C. And I mean this literally. Joshua 1:1-3 reads:
 - 1. After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ²“Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them.
 - D. Moses had been “the man.” He had led the Jews out of slavery, through the Red Sea, to Mount Sinai, met with God, brought them the law. And for the next forty years - while they marched around in the desert – he had been their only leader.
 - E. Think about that. For forty years and every big event, he had been in charge.
 - F. He had been their prophet – relaying to them the message of God. And, in many ways, he had been their priest.
 - 1. Prophets spoke for God to the people
 - 2. Priests represented the people to God.
 - 3. Most of the time you do not have one person doing both jobs. Jesus does of course. He is the premier prophet and He is our High priest.
 - 4. But the Jews had an official priesthood. And Moses is not part of it. But in various ways we see him interceding for the people.
 - G. And Moses has done a remarkable job. Few people have ever faced the leadership challenge he did.

1. You have a million plus former slaves, who do not know what it means to have any autonomy, who suddenly have their freedom and who now need to stay alive in the desert for the next forty years. It is a massive organizational project.
2. Of course, God provided food and water and led them. But Moses was on point.
3. And he had held that spot right up until the end, when, because of his pride and disobedience in an event recorded back in Numbers 20, God says, “You are not going to be allowed to enter into Israel.”
4. And so he dies and Joshua steps in and takes over right as they arrive back at the spot where – 40 years earlier – their parents had failed to move forward. Failed to trust God, failed to obey.
5. God had told them to enter the Promised Land. They had gotten as close as the East bank of the Jordan River. But after they got the report from the spies they had sent in, they balked.
 - a) Twelve spies had gone in. Ten of the twelve had said, “if we cross the Jordan we will die.” Two - Joshua and Caleb – said, “No. God will deliver us.” But they were voted down. And so, plan B was: spend forty years marching around in the desert until every adult who endorsed the plan died.
 - b) Which meant you had forty years of funerals. There is a lot of speculation about how many Jews are traipsing around in the desert. The number you see most often is two million.
 - c) If that is right, and all the adults die over the next forty years – that is over 100 people dying every day.
6. Now, they are back. Same families – new generation. New leader. Entering the Promised land – take two. Time for a second chance. Time to reset and do it right.
7. That is what the Book of Joshua is about.
 - a) Joshua is the New Moses. And whereas in Exodus, Moses had read them the law, now in the Book of Joshua, Joshua reads them the law.
 - b) And whereas Moses had sent out spies, Joshua sends out spies.
 - c) And whereas Moses had a final speech – a last lecture - at the end of the book, Joshua will give a final speech.

III. I suspect you can see why we have chosen this book for this moment. We are turning here because we are facing our own reset. You are facing your own reset, restart, second chance, do-over.

A. There is a sense in which, you are standing on the banks of the Jordan River, and you get to hit do-over. How should you act? What should you do? How should you think about this?

IV. Now, before we jump in, let say a few things:

A. I am not sure that we are turning the corner at this moment. I’m not sure the reset has fully happened.

1. For starters, I am not sure how much normal we get back. One of the new buzz phrases is “the new normal.” That is code for, things have changed.

a) I was on a Zoom call with my brothers and sisters and Mom a couple days ago. And one of my brothers – who did a lot of travel – said, “I can’t see our company going back to much business travel. At best we might get to 30% of where we were before.”

2. You are hearing all of these arguments and illustrations. In The Friday Update this week I noted that Andy Crouch, who was the guy who got my attention back when the Corona Virus was a story out of China. He wrote a long piece arguing that COVID was coming and it was going to change a lot, and the only real question was: will it side track us for a few weeks or a few years? He framed it as a question about facing an unexpected winter or heading into a mini-ice age. Well, last week he Tweeted, “It’s official. It’s an Ice Age.”

3. I do not know if he is right. Some say he is. And there was a Wall Street Journal article this past week that said COVID is just setting related events to come.

4. Who knows? I do not. But the first thing I want to say here is: I’m not sure when this reset arrives or how much the new normal will differ from the old normal.

B. Let me also note that there is a lot we might say about Joshua – the warrior.

1. The man who was born in Egypt, rose to leadership during the Exodus, was one of the 12 spies who initially went into the Promised Land – one of two who said we should trust God and charge ahead. Joshua who was with Moses at Sinai when Moses went up the mountain to meet with God

2. There is much we could say about him - the most important thing being that He is a Christ figure.

a) His name is our first clue. It means “Yahweh is Salvation,” and it is sometimes spelled “Joshua” and sometimes as “Yeshua” – which is the Hebrew form of the Greek name, Jesus.

b) But the big point is, he is a conquering hero – like Jesus.

c) Or the other way to say this is, Jesus is the new and better Joshua.

3. Last week, as we moved into communion, the point highlighted was that Jesus was the new and better David – that David killing Goliath was a foreshadowing of Jesus killing the real giant. That Jesus went out and fought our battle without us even picking up a stone. He did it all when we wouldn’t and couldn’t.

4. And I’ve gone on this riff before. The Bible is not a series of disconnected stories. It is a single narrative in which every story, every character, points beyond itself to one who is greater:

a) The story of Adam and Eve is not just about the first man and woman; it points to the true and better Adam who passed the test in the Garden and whose obedience is ascribed to us.

- b) Likewise, Jesus was the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for our acquittal.
- c) Jesus is the true and better Abraham, who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void to create a new people of God.
- d) Jesus is the true and better Isaac, the son of laughter, of grace, who was not just offered up by his father on the mount, but was truly sacrificed for us all.
- e) Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrested and took the blow of justice we deserved. So we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace that wake us up and discipline us.
- f) Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.
- g) Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant.
- h) Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his foolish friends.
- i) Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn't just risk losing an earthly palace but lost the ultimate heavenly one; who didn't just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people.
- j) Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in.
- k) Jesus is the true and better Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us.
- l) Jesus is the true and better temple, the true and better prophet, the true and better priest, the true and better king, the true and better sacrifice, the true and better lamb, light, bread, and Jesus is the truth and better Joshua – who secures the Promised Land for us.

5. There is more that could be said about Joshua.

C. And there is more that could be said about the Book itself:

- 1. About the big theme – which is that victory comes through faith in God.
- 2. About the battles – such as those in Jericho and Ai
- 3. About the speeches Joshua gives.
- 4. About the cities of refuge and what is behind that.
- 5. We could talk about the altars, about Rahab – the Canaanite prostitute – who is the first Gentile convert and who will later show up in Matthew's genealogy as part of the lineage to Christ.

V. Some of these things will come up later in this series. Today I want to focus on second chances – on resets, mulligans, do-overs, take-twos. Call it whatever you like. I want to make four observations:

A. Second chances are an amazing gift.

1. I don't golf since the stroke, but I used to. And when I did, I would let others work out what we were playing. There was always some discussion on the first tee and then someone would say,
 - a) Jim and I will play you and Phil in a \$5 Nassau with automatic Two-Downs. For fun we are playing Bingo, Bango, and Bongo at two bits a point.
 - b) And then I'd ask two questions: how much can I lose? If everything goes wrong, how much am I out? And if the answer was: \$10 dollars; or, You'll have to buy lunch." I'm good. If it was steeper than that I was like, back it down a bit.
 - c) The second question was: do I get two shots off first tee? And any other Mulligans?
 - d) In golf, you've got to love a mulligan. A do over. A "OK, that was bad. Let's pretend it didn't happen."
2. In school I loved to hear: you can drop one quiz or rewrite one paper, or anything that suggested a second chance.
3. The opportunity for a re-do is an amazing gift.

B. In life, second chances are rare:

1. In life, you generally get what you deserve, or less. In life, you do not often get a real second chance – or if you do, you typically have to pay a pretty steep idiot tax. Which is what happened to the Jews. They had failed to do the right thing – failed to trust God and cross the Jordan. And as a result, they had marched around in the desert for forty years. I've been in that desert. Two hours is an eternity.
2. In life, you do not get a second chance unless you pay a penalty or someone else graciously steps up for you:
 - a) They pay it.
 - b) Or, they forgive you. And say, "I am going to act like that didn't happen." Forgiveness is someone giving you a second chance. You get a reset. It's quite a gift.
 - c) And it's rare. .

C. Third Point: Many people get this gift and waste it.

1. Number one: Second Chances are wonderful; number two, they are rare; number three, many people waste them
2. Peter Drucker said, in the future, when people look back on this period of history - on life at the last part of the 20th century and first part of the 21st, what they we will marvel over is not the advances in technology and medicine, but at how many people were given an extension on life and didn't do anything with it.
3. Two hundred years ago, life expectancy was in the 30s. One hundred years ago it was in the 40s. Today it is twice that. So many of us end up with a much longer life.
4. I'll let Drucker's comments speak for themselves. My take is a related but different. I am suggesting that many people get a second chance but do not make the most of it.

5. Some do. Some see it as a gift and value it. But not everyone.
6. Twenty years ago, a Steve Martin, Danny Glover and Kevin Kline starred in a movie called Grand Canyon. The lives and fates of several people are randomly intertwined – but the big deal is, they each have a major life-altering event. And it changes everything. And it causes them to reflect on everything. And they all say that they are going to change because of the event. But only half really do.
7. Given a second chance they all say, “I am going to change.” But only half of them do.
8. It is hard to change. Not impossible. And indeed, God is committed to getting it done. He who began a good work in you will continue it – will complete it. It will eventually happen. But the sooner the better. Spiritual maturity is its own reward. Life works better when we become more like Christ.
9. Not necessarily easier, although in many ways it is. But better. However, we need to leverage the opportunities we are given. We certainly need to leverage any resets we are offered. Will you?

D. Four: COVID is a reset opportunity.

1. Number one: Second Chances are wonderful; number two, they are rare; number three, many people waste them. Number four. COVID is a reset opportunity.
2. Trials – like COVID - are a great opportunity to grow, but no guarantee that it will happen.
3. I was reading a Jewish news journal the other day. And the writer was reflecting on the Peggy Noonan’s articles in the WSJ back in March – during which time she was suggesting that this slow down was just what we needed to reset. And how she was optimistic that we would come back different. We’d be more thoughtful, more in control, deeper. The writer said, “it’s not happening.”
4. Well, maybe he is right. Maybe it is not happening for everyone. But it can happen for you.
5. Are you growing through this?
6. I have been asking people what they are learning because of COVID and all that is happening. And I have two observations about what I have heard.
 - a) First, some people are learning some helpful and interesting things. I’ve written down the following responses:
 - (1) Modern life is more fragile than I knew;
 - (2) I need others.
 - (3) I’ve spent a lot of time doing a lot of things that didn’t actually matter;
 - (4) I have come to see the difference between hope and optimism;
 - (5) I have been surprised by the goodness of people;
 - (6) I have been surprised by how ugly fear is;
 - (7) I’ve come to realize that I can ditch the commute.

b) Some people have really impressed me. And some not so much. Some seem very ready to talk about the Netflix programs they have binge watched, but not much else.

VI. Let me encourage you to see this disruption as an opportunity.

A. I initially wrote, “see it as a gift,” but that is not exactly right.

B. I am not suggesting that all of the moving parts of this moment are good

1. The disease, the death of George Floyd, the protests and riots that have followed, the economic disruption, the unemployment, the lock down

2. There is much that is decidedly not good. I can’t call this a gift. But let me call it an opportunity.

3. Many have more down time. Perhaps you do.

4. Yes, Zoom is stealing much of that.

5. But, there is a disruption and we can reflect and grow and figure out how we are going to rebuild our lives differently.

C. Are you reflecting?

D. If you are stuck, perhaps the first step for you is not reflection but lament.

1. You might need to start by facing your loss and making that a matter of prayer – going so far as to express your frustration with God to God. The Psalms have give you the words to say. They contain a lot of complaints against the management.

2. Let them help you get unstuck. Because, this is a reset opportunity.

VII. Second chances are wonderful, but rare. And many people waste them. COVID is an opportunity to reset. May we use it well.

VIII.

IX.

X. Closing Prayer: Include the idea that we are given lots of opportunities for restarts – your mercies are new every morning. When bigger ones come, help us seize the gift.