

Good Morning, Our theme for today's message is going to be one that everyone may have experienced a time or too in there lives. I know in my life if it was not for today's theme, I would probably not be standing here before you today. So what is the theme of today's message" Well, I'm not ready to reveal it just yet, but instead I thought that if I told funny story first it would help to mentally prepare us for when I do reveal our message theme today. So let's begin with a story about a priest's passion to play golf. As a young man, Robert was an exceptional golfer. At the age of 26, however, he decided to become a priest, and joined a rather peculiar order. He took the usual vows of poverty, chastity, but his order also required that he quit golf and never play again. This was particularly difficult for Robert, but he agreed and was finally ordained a priest. One Sunday morning, the Reverend Father Robert woke up and realizing it was a beautiful and sunny spring day, he decided he just had to play golf. So, he told the Associate Pastor that he was feeling sick and convinced him to say Mass for him that day. As soon as the Associate Pastor left the room, Father Robert headed out of town to a golf course about fifty miles away. This way he knew he wouldn't accidentally meet anyone he knew from his church? Setting up on the first tee, he was alone. After all, it was Sunday morning and everyone else was in church! At about this time, Saint Peter leaned over to the Lord while looking down from the heavens and exclaimed, "You're not going to let him get away with this, are you?" The Lord sighed, and said, "No, I guess not. " Just then Father Robert hit the ball and it shot straight toward the pin, dropping just short of it, rolled up and fell into the hole. It was a 400-yard hole in one! St. Peter was astonished. He looked at the Lord and asked, "Why did you let him do that?" The Lord smiled and replied, "Who's he going to tell?" So now that we have heard our story this morning we can begin to further prepare ourselves to discover what the theme of today's message is all about. So how many of us have already discovered what it is? Ok, I have a confession to make; our funny story didn't really contain any hints or insights as to what our theme is for today. But guess what? It almost did. You see it is a story about a playing golf and our theme is related to a term used in golf. So what is our them about today? It's about a taking a "Mulligan". Now some of us may be aware of this term's meaning but if you do not play golf the term "Mulligan" is probably not even in your vocabulary. So according to the PGA publication on golf terminology we find that a Mulligan is defined as the custom of hitting a second ball – without penalty—on a hole, usually the first tee. (Mulligans are not allowed according to the rules of golf). So with this new understanding of what a mulligan is we might better

understand this joke about taking a mulligan. An American golfer went to Scotland and played golf with a newly acquainted Scottish golfer. After a bad tee shot, the American played a "Mulligan" which was an extremely good one. He then asked the Scottish golfer, "What do you call a Mulligan here in Scotland?" The Scot replied, "We call it a score of 3." You see when you play a mulligan you don't have to count your first stroke and you also don't have to count the penalty stroke for re-teeing your ball, you just get to hit the ball a second time as if you never hit the ball the first time. Sort of like a "Do Over" or a "Second Chance" So how many of us are starting to figure out what the theme to our message is today? If your thinking that the theme of today's message is going to be about "Getting a Second Chance" you would be correct. So, what does the Bible say to us about getting second chances in life? Actually, if we think about it, one of the greatest lessons we can learn from the bible is that God is the God of Second chances. All we have to do is to look at the life of King David, who took another man's wife for himself. King David even went on and had the women's husband killed in battle to seal the deal so to speak. Then there was the Disciple Paul who hunted down early Christians and had them arrested, tortured, and killed. I believe it would be easy for us to say that with all the sins these two men committed that their odds of ending up with heavenly lives would be slim to none. But God knew different, didn't He? God went on to give each of them each a second chance, a second chance that reformed their lives into the men God knew they could become. Now, I know, for myself that I have been blessed with many God-inspired, life-changing events that gave me second chances in my life. There was the second chance of being blessed with sobriety. There was the second chance of being a survivor of mental illness and then there was the second chance of finding God's call on my heart to serve as a pastor. You see, would who would have ever believed that an anxiety laden, depressive neurotic, alcoholic would find himself behind a pulpit preaching God's word. As I think back to what life changing event happened that contributed most to my becoming a pastor, I believe it was when I was accepted into the "Beyond the River Academy". The "Beyond the River Academy" was a seminary program designed to prepare pastors for rural ministry. As I attended and graduated the academy, I was continually amazed how God found a program for me that allowed me to become a pastor, even though I was still teaching high school at the time. But there was thing about the academy that I was always curious about and it was about the name "Beyond the River Academy". I have to confess that I didn't really understand what "Beyond the River" was really referring to. It was not until I took my class on the

Old Testament where I discovered the significance of the name. It was when I came across the story of the Israelites running out of water and God giving Moses a staff with the instructions to strike a rock to bring water out of it. We find in Numbers 20, ***“Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank.*** I remember that when I first read this passage I didn’t really catch the reason why God became so angry with Moses. After all Moses struck the rock and then water came out of it. But the mistake that Moses made was that he did not give credit to God’s Glory for bringing the water from the rock. You see, Moses used the word “We” referring to only Aaron and himself instead of God. Next we find God telling Moses that, ***“Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”*** And then it hit me, just like a ton of bricks, that God was telling Moses that he would never cross the river Jordan. What a shock, in my newness to studying the bible it never occurred to me that Moses never crossed the river Jordan into the “promised land”. I was now beginning to understand the significance of the name, “Beyond the River Academy” and its reference to the fact that Moses never crossed the River Jordan but God still kept His promise to deliver the Israelites “Beyond the River” into the Promised Land” As our story continues, with Moses and Aaron not crossing the Jordan River, we find God raising up Joshua to lead the Israelites into the “Promised Land”. From Joshua 1:1-3, ***“After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying, 2 “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses”.*** But there was one major problem that laid before them, you see the entrance to the “Promised Land” was occupied by the King of Jericho. And it would take a battle to overcome them and move into the “Promised Land”. Many of us are familiar with the “fall of the Walls of Jericho” as the Israelites led by Joshua along with God’s power were able to conquer and burn down the City of Jericho. But with their victory God told them that all of Jericho’s devoted treasure such as the gold, silver, bronze and iron were to be put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. So with their recent victory the Israelites set their sights on the next kingdom to conquer, the Kingdom of Ai. But the Israelites were in for a real

shocker because the support God had provided in their victory over Jericho would be held back in their battle with the Kingdom of Ai. You see God was aware of a robbery were some of the devoted items were stolen. We find in Joshua 7:1, ***“But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites.”*** So I guess, with out God’s support, we can predict the outcome of the Israelites first assault against the Kingdom of Ai. Yep, they lost! And Joshua was furious because of the missing items. He felt all was lost and God had abandoned them altogether but in Joshua 7:10-12 we find the Lord speaking to Joshua ***“Stand up! Why have you fallen upon your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I imposed on them. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have acted deceitfully, and they have put them among their own belongings. Therefore the Israelites are unable to stand before their enemies; they turn their backs to their enemies, because they have become a thing devoted for destruction themselves. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.”*** I would like to read the last line once again for us this morning. ***“I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you”.*** You know, sometimes when we read the Bible we can become lost in the wording of the message that God is trying to tell us. But with the directness of this message from God, I’m afraid it’s very clear and to the point of what Joshua and the Israelites need to do for God to return to them. Now, when we think back to King David’s story, do we think that God had a similar message for him? Or how about the Disciple Paul, did Jesus have a similar message for him to? And then there are all of us; do we think that God has ever had a similar message for us? Well, the answer for that question is not going to be answered today in this message. But I am going to ask that each of us for the next week, keep asking ourselves, if we have ever received a similar message for us to remove those things that keep us from a relationship with God? In next week’s message we are going to continue with Joshua’s story and find out if God gave a second chance to the Joshua and the Israelites. What do you think happened? If your curiosity gets the best of you, take out your bibles and turn to the Book of Joshua, Chapters 7 and 8. Happy reading, Amen!

June 28, 2015 Worship Service Readings

First Lesson Joshua 1:1-3,

“After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying, 2 “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses”.

Please stand and join together as we sing, “Glory Be To The Father”

No. 70 in our hymnals.

Gospel Lesson John 1:6-9

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; 7 but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Please join together as we sing Hymn No. _____
