

Good Morning, for those of us who were here last Sunday, we know that today's message is going to be about the theme of receiving second chances in our lives. But for those who weren't here, last Sunday, I would like to take a moment and give a quick review of last week's message. Our message started with a story about Moses disappointing God when he strikes a rock with his staff to bring water from it for the Israelites. We found God saying, ***"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?" 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.*** You see God was upset because Moses failed to acknowledge God's part in the miracle. So God told Moses that he would not be crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. ***"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."*** Next we learned of Moses' death along with God appointing Joshua, Moses' assistant, as the new leader of the Israelites. From the Book of Joshua, ***"After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all these people, into the land that I am giving to them..."*** We also learned of the Battle of Jericho, where Joshua and his army along with God's help, destroyed the town and won the battle. And following the battle there were many treasures collected that were to be kept in the treasury of the House of the Lord. But some of the Israelites stole from the treasury, which had angered God. From Joshua, ***"But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things, (they) took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites."*** And as a result of God's anger, He did not help the Israelites in their next battle with the Kingdom of Ai and they lost. And with this defeat, Joshua became very frustrated and angry about the missing treasure. Next we found the Lord speaking to Joshua ***"Stand up! Why have you fallen upon your face? Israel has sinned...They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have acted deceitfully..."*** Then God made this statement to Joshua, ***"I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you."*** And it was with this statement from God to Joshua where we left off with last week's message. So, what happened next? Well, Joshua did exactly what God had asked and found who was responsible for taking the devoted things. And then that person was punished. Then God said to Joshua, ***"Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and***

attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves.” So there we have it, Joshua’s and the Israelites second chance. You see by following God’s instructions they were now able to be back in God’s good graces. And with God watching over them they went on to be successful in acquiring more of the Promised Land. This story of Joshua and the Israelites is a pretty cut and dry example of losing God’s favor, receiving punishment, receiving a message to change, then changing what needed to be done. And when all that was accomplished finding God’s favor again. Now does what happened between God and Joshua sound familiar in any of our lives? For me it sounds just like when I was a young boy, like in the 2nd grade, getting into trouble for something I did like throwing a rock through a garage window. After I did it I knew it was wrong, but I hoped I would not get caught. Well that didn’t happen, Mr. Stare, the director of the boys home, called me into his office and asked me if I was the one who broke the window. First off I was terrified but finally admitted that I had thrown the rock. I knew that I was going to receive a punishment, and was a little worried about that, but something else happened to me as well. Somehow I had sensed from our conversation that Mr. Stare was disappointed in me and I had lost some of his favor, sound familiar? In remembering back I believe my punishment was to work in the kitchen until I earned enough money to pay for the damage that I had done. Then Mr. Stare told me to never break another window or destroy other people’s property. But there was another lesson I learned and it was to try and not disappoint Mr. Stare again. But just like God did for Joshua and the Israelites, Mr. Stare did for me; he gave me a second chance. In fact, Mr. Stare gave me many more second chances. And what I remember most about my relationship with Mr. Stare was that it really hurt inside my heart when I would disappoint him by getting into trouble. And for me, today, I find that when I do something wrong it is more about the disappointment I bring to others than it’s about getting caught and being punished. I guess Mr. Stare taught me something very special about my relationship with God because when I find myself in sin, it is not about the punishment but more about my disappointing God by what I have done. Now, what I have next for us is another example of boys getting into trouble and their learning about the seriousness of what they had done. ***A couple had two little boys, ages 8 and 10, who were excessively mischievous. The two were always getting into trouble and their parents could be assured that if any mischief occurred in their town their two***

young sons were in some way involved. The parents were at their wits end as to what to do about their sons' behavior. One day, the mother heard of a clergyman in town that has been successful in disciplining children in the past, and asked for his help. The clergyman agreed to speak with the boys, but asked to see them individually. The 8-year-old went to meet with him first. The clergyman sat the boy down and asked him sternly, "Where is God?" The boy made no response, so the clergyman repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God?" Again the boy made no attempt to answer, so the clergyman raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face, "WHERE IS GOD?" At that the boy bolted from the room and ran directly home, slamming himself in his closet. His older brother followed him into the closet and said, "What happened?" The younger brother replied, "We are in BIG trouble now... They can't find God and they're blaming it on us!"

Well, I sure hope the boy's get a good lawyer; after all, they're really going to need a second chance after what they think they did. So now that we have had some examples of getting second chances in life, what can we take away from our message this morning? What I would like for us to take away would be the answer to this question, "Is God finished with Us yet?" We know from stories in the Bible that God was not finished with Adam after disobeying God. We know that God was not finished with King David for taking another man's wife and killing her husband. And we know that God was not finished with Joshua and the Israelites for taking the devoted treasure. So if God was not finished with them after the things they had done, I believe we can be assured that God is not finished with us as we sin and realize the pain of what we have done. In Lamentations 3:17-24 we find our hope to know of a God who does not give up on us. ***"I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the Lord." The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."*** So, how fortunate are we that God does not give up on us when we sin? How fortunate are we that God still loves us when we sin. And finally, how fortunate are we that God gives us the hope of a new start in life after we sin. But this hope of a second chance is not a free ride where we think we can continue to sin knowing that God will give us a second chance and all will be good again. You see there is something we must do that shows God that we're not just trying to take

advantage of His love and continue to do wrong and get away with it. You see what we must do is actually the complete opposite of trying to take advantage of God's love. What we must do is to come to God with the attitude of having humble hearts knowing that what we have done is wrong. What we must do is to come to God with an attitude of sorrowful confession knowing that what we have done is wrong. And last, what we must do is to come to God with an attitude of growing and learning from the wrongs we have committed. You see God's life for us is about giving ourselves the opportunity of growing beyond our failures. It's about knowing that "God is not finished with us yet". How many of us know that we have things in our past that we are not proud of. How many of us know that we have things in our past that we feel God has not forgiven. And How many of us know that if still harbor the guilt and shame of those things in our hearts that we are not learning and growing beyond our failures. You see, when God gives us a second chance He is removing the guilt and shame from our failures. God is wiping the slate clean. He is truly giving us a "New Morning". What we need to do after the slate is clean is to remember our past in a different way, in a different light. We need to remember our past in a light that shines on how we have changed. A light that shines on what we have become instead of remembering the darkness of the lives of who we were. After all what good is a second chance in life if we never leave our past. I would like to close our message today with a poem from Helen Steiner Rice about "Another Chance"

***How often we wish for another chance; to make a fresh beginning.
A chance to blot out our mistakes; And change failure into winning.
It does not take a new day; To make a brand new start,
It only takes a deep desire; To try with all our heart.
To live a little better; And to always be forgiving
And to add a little sunshine; To the world in which we're living.
So never give up in despair; And think that you are through,
For there's always a tomorrow; And the hope of starting new.
Amen***