WHEN GOD GOES SILENT
ONE OFF WEEKEND
Joshua 5:13-15 // Josh Weidmann
November 20, 2017

CRAIG: Hey, Mission Hills. Three quick things for you today. Number one, thank you to all of you who have made a contribution to the Imagine initiative. I am so encouraged by your generosity and so excited to see all the ways that God is gonna use your generous giving to make room locally, regionally, and globally for people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. It’s not too late, that’s number two. If you have not yet made your contribution you can still do so. We’re gonna be collecting contributions up until the first weekend of December which is when we’ll announce the amount that’s come in so far. And so don’t miss your opportunity to be part of that victory weekend by making your contribution. You can use the envelope that you’ve probably already got or you can go online and make a contribution.

We would love to have 100% participation from everyone who calls Mission Hills their church home at whatever level God leads you to. So make sure you don’t miss the opportunity to do that. And number three, it’s my huge pleasure to be able to introduce to you our guest speaker for this weekend. Josh is a man that many of you will not need an introduction for. If you’ve been coming to Mission Hills for a while you already know him well. But over the last couple of years I’ve gotten to know Josh as a friend, as a fellow pastor, as an author, and just as a wonderful man of God. And so would you join me in giving a big Mission Hills welcome to Pastor Josh Weidmann?

JOSH: Good morning Mission Hills. It’s so good to see you all this morning. It’s just like coming home for the holidays. I love it, and it is great to see you. For those of you who I know, it’s good to see familiar faces. If I’m meeting you for the first time, so nice to be here. I had to turn left out of my neighborhood instead of right today to come just down to the other end of county line. I have the privilege of serving as pastor at Grace Chapel, and I want you to know we’re not just that church with gold roofs across from Park Meadows. We’re a church that loves you, and that prays for you, and is all in with what you guys are doing.

To think that you’ve got 75 years of ministry and I got to be a part of that for a little while which was awesome, to think what you’re doing with the valley, and the mill and now with Poland, and Mission Hills en Español, are you kidding me? This is unbelievable. You guys are in an amazing season of ministry. And I want you to know that as your neighbors, or people right down the street, we love you. We’re all in for you. We’re excited for you. Molly and I can’t help but think about the people that we love here whenever we’re driving in the area, or driving down C470 and past Broadway. We pray for you and will continue to do so.

Molly’s doing great. She’s still in love with me which is a miracle so that’s going well and we have four kids which are doing very well. I keep trying to talk her into a fifth, so we’ll see how that goes. There’s never a dull moment around our house with our four kids. There’s also never enough diapers around our house. Maybe some of you know how that goes. I love raising kids, man. It tests me. It tries me. It makes me realize how inadequate I am almost all of the time, and yet these kids, they look at me like, “Dad, you totally know what you’re doing.” And I never wanna reveal to them, “I actually have no idea what I’m doing,” right? But they just…they seem to trust me and I’m trying to do my best to not mess them up.

Take for example recently, the time I was sent out on a solo mission for my wife with all four kids. And we’re getting ready to get into the van and she’s like, “You got this?” I’m like, “Totally got this,” right? And the kids are like, “Dad’s got it. It’s gonna be great,” right? So we’re all going out the van. The last thing she says to me before the door closes is, “Don’t drop the baby’s bottle on the ground.” I’m thinking, well, if that’s the worst thing that happens I’m gonna be okay, right? Don’t drop the bottle on the ground. Well, no sooner than the door shuts behind me I’m walking down the two steps into our garage, I don’t just drop the bottle on the ground, I drop it into the giant blue trash can right next to our stairs, right?
And the kids just look at me and go, “Dad, she said don’t drop it on the ground. You dropped it in the trash.” I’m like, “Don’t worry. I got this all under control.” I said, “Carolina, come here.” I had already tried to reach the bottle myself and I couldn’t get it. So I said to my three-year-old, “Come here, come here…” And then meanwhile, I hand my cell phone to my other daughter. I said, “Take a picture of this. This is gonna be awesome.” So I said, “Carolina, give me your ankles.” She just looked at me like, “Dad, really?” And I’m like, “No, no. Seriously, give me your ankles.” I grab her by her ankles and I lower her upside down into the trash can, all right? No joke.

And my other daughter takes a picture and my son all the while says, “Hold your breath, Carolina.” Because in our house, that outside trash can it contains one main thing, stinky diapers, okay? So we called that operation stinky poo, okay? “Here we go. I’m gonna lower you into this trash.” So I lower her down into the trash can. And Chandler’s like, “Carolina, you’re gonna die with the smell. You’re gonna die.” I’m like, “She’s not gonna die, okay? Grab the bottle, grab the bottle.” I pull her up out. I get the bottle off. I’m like, “Kids, get in the car fast, fast. Before the door opens, before anything happens, just get in the car.” I gotta tell you, my daughter, not one time, not one time did she say, “Dad, is this okay for you to hold me by my ankles and put me into a trash can?” She never asked. She also never looked at me and said, “Do other dads do this to their kids?” She never questioned it. She just trusted me. She trusted me.

Today, I wanna talk about trust. I wanna talk about the times when our heavenly Father who knows good and well everything He is doing, but yet still calls us to trust Him. Today, I wanna talk about those moments where it feels like He’s asking us to do something that doesn’t make sense, those moments where it seems like He’s saying, “Come on, increase your faith, go with me on this one,” those confusing moments where He seems to be silent or lacking explanation and calling us to faith, that’s what I wanna talk about today. I’ve walked with the Lord long enough to know that our Heavenly Father doesn’t always give us explanation. He often calls us to trust and have faith without explanation, no slide deck, no email, no flip chart. He just simply says, “Trust me on this one.”

I’ve entitled my message today “When God Goes Silent,” because I realize that there are moments when God goes silent, there isn’t an explanation, that we desperately long for and we have to make sense of those. And it doesn’t matter if you’ve been walking with the Lord for only a few days or you’ve been walking with the Lord for a few decades. I guarantee in your faith with Jesus Christ you will experience times where God goes silent.

Today, I wanna talk about those times and how we increase in our trust in the moments where God seems to be on mute. Usually, I’m an expository preacher. I take verse by verse, line by line and we go through a specific passage. But today, I’m gonna be topical or topisotory. Expository and topical together because we will get to a main passage by the end, but I wanna systematically and biblically look at a few passages before we get to our main passage and then I will leave you with that. And all the while, I hope to apply God’s word to your life so that whether you are in a season of scarcity or bounty, when it comes to the Lord’s voice you will increase in your faith. That’s my hope today. Will you pray with me? Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us to trust you. God, thank you for calling us to trust you even when it doesn’t always make sense to trust you. Thank you, Father, that you are bigger than our circumstances. Thank you, Father, that you are a God of outcomes and that you know what is to come in each and every one of our lives and the situations that we’re facing. But thank you, Father, first and foremost, above all things, for your son. Thank you for the Gospel. And thank you that today we can come and listen to your Word and know that it’s true because your son came and made a way for us to commune with you so that your Holy Spirit could dwell with us. So today, God, I say to you, please let your Holy Spirit speak. May He be the loudest voice in this room. Use me as you see fit. Your servant is here reporting for duty. I love you, Father. In the name of your perfect Son. And all the people said?

CONGREGATION: Amen.

JOSH: Amen. Does God hide from us? Does God hide from us? No, He doesn’t, but there’s certainly times when it feels like He
does. There’s moments where we lose the job, right? The job is gone and all of a sudden we’re not sure what’s next. And we’re like, “God, when are you gonna intervene in this one?” Or we’re dealing with a rebellious child and we can’t make sense of their actions and they certainly aren’t hearing us and so we ask for God to intervene, but He doesn’t. It seems like He’s hiding, like He’s nowhere to be found. Or those moments where we’re in the doctor’s office and he comes back in the room and he said, “I’m sorry, but I have something that I need to tell you.” Something that’s unimaginable, something we thought we would never hear and he gives us those results and we say, “How can this be? God, are you gonna do something? Are you here? God, where are you?”

The truth is there are moments in our life, usually the hardest moments, where we feel like God is far from us. But what if I told you this morning that God never hides. He only waits for us to return to Him. He never hides. He waits for us to come back to Him, constantly calling for our trust because trust in God is the antidote to fear, to overcoming confusion for those moments when it feels like He’s hiding or those moments where it feels like He’s silent. He calls us to trust. I’ve learned that to trust the heart of God, we have to go deeper into it, know His Word, know the gospel, have the Holy Spirit propel in us even in the moments when we aren’t hearing Him or feeling Him. We’re an instant gratification society. I want an answer now. I wanna feel him now. But when it comes to our relationship with God, if I really trust His heart, then hearing His voice becomes irrelevant.

If I trust what He’s doing in my life, if I trust that He has His purposes intended for His own glory and that He’s working it all together in my life, that I don’t have to always hear His voice because I know His heart. However, there are those times where it seems like His voice is muffled. It could be in the middle of suffering or can be in the midst of the mundane life. You know how it is, the business of life, the email that never stops, the text messages that go off, the Facebook messages that just seem to build. It seems like everyone else has something to say other than God. The opinions of our family, the opinions of our friends, the things they say to us all of a sudden crowd out the voice of God that we so desperately want to hear. It seems like at times, even the crickets have a louder voice than God. And we wait for Him to speak, to say something and it’s like He’s sitting in the corner refusing to talk until everybody else is quiet.

When the line between us and God goes silent, you can’t help but wonder, do we have a bad connection? You become overcome by fear. You’re longing for clarity. You just want some comfort. These are all real desires in our relationship with God, but when we don’t experience them, doubts bubble up. Discontentment begins to overtake us and most of us start looking to our own life and pointing fingers saying, “Well, that’s why He’s silent. That’s why He’s not talking.” We look to our own life. We assume that God’s just another version of another person because people in our life go silent. People give us the cold shoulder. People give us the silent treatment. So why wouldn’t God?

Recently, after preaching a sermon, this saintly soul, this woman who’s walked with the Lord for 30 years came up to me and she said, “Josh, I’m freaked out.” And I said, “Why? What’s wrong?” And she said, “I can’t hear the Lord like I used to.” She said, “I’ve walked close with Him for over 30 years, but now...” and she said this through tears, “It feels like He’s nowhere to be found and I’m freaking out.” My stomach lurched forward and lodged into my throat because I knew exactly what she was talking about. I know that feeling.

This may not surprise you. In fact, I hope that it comforts you. But we’re not the first people in this earth or on this earth to experience seasons of silence from God. As long as there have been people, God’s created people on Earth, there have been those who are frustrated with Him, who fume at Him, who shake their fist at Him, and long for Him to talk. We’re not the first people to experience God’s silence. Let me just ask you, think of a biblical example, maybe this section right here, think of a biblical example. Who can you think of as somebody who God went silent towards in the Bible? Any examples come to mind?

**CONGREGATION**: David.

**JOSH**: David? King David, right? David definitely had seasons where he longed for God to speak, longed for God to speak after
his own sin, longed for God to speak other times in his life in the midst of battles. That’s for sure an instance and we’ll come back to that. How about this section? What’s an example of someone in the Bible? Joab, right? So life imploded. He wanted so badly for answers for why his life is imploding? His wife saying to him, “Hey, something’s wrong. Curse the name of God.” His own friends’ saying it and yet it seemed like there were hours, months, weeks, days at least where God wasn’t speaking. He eventually spoke, but there were moments of silence. How about this section? What’s an example of when God went silent for somebody in the Bible? Anybody?

How about Abraham? Abraham was a man who had to walk with the pounding of every foot up to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son, who commentators believe could have been as old as 40 years old when he went to sacrifice his son on Mount Moriah. Can you imagine that? Leading your son up to Mount Moriah to kill him? Longing for God to speak. Say something please. And, finally, God did speak. Finally, God said something, but there were moments along that path as they walked to the mountain where God was silent. How about this section? Anyone over here have an example of when God was silent in the Bible? Moses? Totally. Forty years, right? Forty years they wandered. Yes, God spoke to Moses. Time and again He spoke to Moses or spoke through Moses. But you know there were months, days, hours, weeks, where God was silent and he longed so desperately for God to speak.

I think about Isaiah, this unpopular preacher, this man who was rebuked by his contemporary people because they were getting the judgment of God at least spoken of what was to come from Isaiah’s mouth. They didn’t like the sermons he was preaching. Yet there had to be moments for Isaiah where he’s longing for God to back him up. Come on, God. Say something. Show up. But even for Isaiah, there were moments of silence. Or think about the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was this man who after the Damascus Road experience went to this town and had a few days of silence, wondering, “God, what’s happening? What’s next? And are you going to speak?” Or how about later in his life with a thorn in his side, this thing that caused him great agony and he said, “God, would you just speak to me? Would you say something to me about this?” Yet it seemed like there was silence.

Of all these characters that we mentioned, there’s many, many more that could be mentioned, but David is perhaps my favourite because David was a man who wasn’t afraid to say to God, “Listen, I need you to open your mouth.” He spoke boldly to the Lord. I think about Psalms 83:1 which says very clearly, “Oh, God, do not keep silent. Do not hold your peace or be still, God.” This is not just a cool phrase to put on an [inaudible 00:17:30] or a cross-stitch or a coffee mug, all right? This is the desperate plea of a man who wanted God to speak. Do not be silent, God. Speak now. Don’t keep your peace from me. Do not be still. Speak.

And yet we can assume that there were moments where David waited, Abraham waited, Moses waited, Joab waited, Isaiah waited, Paul waited. They waited and in their waiting, they grew stronger in their trust for God. These towering examples of figures in the faith at times didn’t feel towering but tiny because they endured God’s silence. They still persevered. They still pushed through. They pushed through their doubts and their disillusionment to overcome those times where they just asked, “God, where are you?” John said it well when he said, “Authentic faith always leaves room for God to be silent.” True faith, mature faith understands that God will go silent at times. There’s gonna be seasons where He doesn’t speak. He doesn’t speak in a loud voice or He doesn’t speak at all. But we must never lose faith to know that He’s present and that He has a plan.

Isaiah chapter 55, the prophet Isaiah said on behalf of God, “My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. That should be incredibly comforting to all of us, that he can say, “I don’t think the way you think. I don’t act the way you act. My wisdom is greater than your wisdom. My mercy is deeper than your mercy. I am more deliberate in everything I do than anything you will ever do.” My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways. That’s a beautiful verse, but just two verses prior to that, Isaiah says to the people, “Come near to the Lord while He can still be found.” In Isaiah 55:6 he says, “Come near to Him. Draw near to Him.” Basically, trust Him.

And then two verses later after he invites us to trust he says, “But remember, His thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways.” Overcoming God’s silence starts by understanding why God is quiet. If we wanna overcome the moments where it feels like He’s gone mute then we have to understand He goes silent to call us to trust. He goes silent to call us closer. That’s why He doesn’t speak at times. Overcoming God’s silence starts by understanding why He’s so quiet.
Let me state what I think is the largest problem we have when it comes to understanding God’s silence. I think the largest problem we have is that we project our past experiences on to God. We have an idea of how we think God should act and then we project onto him He’s gonna act this way because of our past experience with another person. In fact, I think we make a hobby out of it. It’s like this spiritual hobby that we have of projecting things on to God. Now, I have lots of hobbies in my life. I collect socks, I’ve shared that with you before. That’s one of my hobbies. But I have another hobby that’s almost equally as nerdy, okay?

This is my box of coffee equipment. I collect coffee equipment. I collect brewing devices. I know. It’s sounds great, but just go with me for a second, okay? If you came over to my house and you walked in the door, the first question I would probably ask you is, “Can I get you a cup of coffee?” Now, I would be very excited if you said, “Yes, I would love a cup of coffee.” If you said a cup of tea, we’re still okay, okay? There’s peace and bonds in Christ that overcome all things, right? So we’re still okay. But if you say, “Totally. I would love that brown nectar of heaven in a cup. Please, will you get that for me?” I would be like, “Oh, so this is good. Okay, great. I would love to get that for you.”

Then I would ask you another question. I would say to you, “How would you like me to brew it for you?” And if you are like, “Oh, you asked how you could brew for me? Oh, that’s a great...” And if all of a sudden you said to me, “Do you have aeropress? Can you make me a cup of aeropress?” I would be like, “Yes, I can. I have an aeropress.” And then if you said, “You know what? I’m really feeling in the mood for some full immersion coffee today. Could you just do me a pot of some full immersion coffee, kind of like they do in Europe? Could you do...” I’ll be, “No problem. Got it, right?” If you said, “Hey, I love an Americano or a latte, a capuccino.” I’ll be like, “Great, got it. That didn’t fit in the box, but I have this massive large espresso machine that my wife just recently kicked to the other room. But it was on our front counter. I’m not bitter about that. It still has a place in our house, and I love my espresso machine and I would make you whatever you wanted from my espresso machine.”

If you said, “Listen, I’m really in the mood for a really good cup of pour-over. Do you have a Chemex by chance?” I’ll be like, “Oh, I did have a Chemex. My wife broke that in the dishes, but I have a hearty old brewing device so we could just use that. I got my scale. I’d hand grind you whatever you want, right? We could select the beans together. We could smell them. We could make sure that they were right.” If you said, “Hey, do you have one of those rock brewer systems?” I’d be like, “Yeah, totally got that. This way we can control the pressure ourselves. How about you grab a handle and I’ll grab a handle and then we’ll just like...this’ll be a bonding moment, right? We’ll just push it down together. That’ll be fun.” I mean, I would be so into it if you were that into it because coffee is a hobby for me. Brewing equipment is a hobby for me.

I got another hobby that’s not quite as cool. I collect past experiences and I project them on to people. And dare I say I even project them on to God. I have past experiences with people that influence how I make sense of a present situation in my life. I predetermine, if you will, how I’m going to feel because of my case of past experiences. And just like I categorize my different brewing systems into full immersion, or gravity driven, or pressure extraction, so I also have categories on how I will feel in any given situation and I can pull those out and brew up any amount of feelings I wanna feel at any given moment. It’s messed up.

But the truth is most of us do it. Most of us lose sleep, stress out, freak out about current situations because of our past experiences. Let me put it this way: we let our past experiences be more believable to us than the people who love us and are presently in front of us, including God Almighty. We have a God who never leaves us. He never stops loving us, but sadly we use our hobby of projecting feelings of our past onto our relationship with God. If you studied psychology or you’ve been in counselling before, you’re familiar with this term transference, and transference is the phenomenon characterized by unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another or should we also say, God. We instinctively, and often irrationally, project onto people something from our past. It’s why you don’t like that guy Bob at work because he drives you crazy, because he’s competitive and he reminds you of somebody back on the playground and you just can’t get past that.

That’s why you don’t like those people in your life group and you think they’re opinionated and they say the things they do because they remind you of mom and dad who used to always be opinionated and say things. It’s transference. When I
transfer the feelings that I have over something I’ve experienced with people, imperfect people, when I transfer the things I’ve experienced from imperfect people on to a perfect God, I will misinterpret His actions every single time. We know that we are made in the image of God, but we so often treat God as if He was made in our image. We assume that He’s gonna act like the people of the past. We assume that when He goes silent He’s acting like that friend who shut us out after we disappointed Him.

We suppose that when He gives us the cold shoulder He’s just acting like a boyfriend or girlfriend we had when we had a little mishap with them and they just dropped us. We picture Him to be just like our parents who yelled at us, screamed at us when we didn’t listen and finally slammed the door and gave us the silent treatment for a few days. Friends, I say to you, if we project our past experiences upon God, we will misinterpret Him and His silence. As soon as we enter a season of silence we try to figure out, God, why are you acting this way? But what if I told you that His silence is nothing like what you’ve experienced in past earthly relationships? What if I told you that His actions can’t be understood by merely comparing Him to what you know other people act like?

When we treat God like another human, we reduce Him to two main options: that He’s either for us or He’s against us because the truth is, we treat people that way. We assume that people are either for us or against us. Of course, there’s people all in between, but we don’t care about them because we’re not as close to them. But the people that we care about, we assume they’re either friend or foe, and we do the same thing with God. We put Him on one end of those extremes and all of a sudden when the stark reality of His silence slaps us in the face we automatically assume that He’s against us even if it’s just momentarily, if for some reason He’s gone silent and He’s acting just like every other human who’s gone silent on us. He isn’t another version of us. He isn’t another version of us. Say that out loud with me.

He isn’t another version of us. He’s not. He’s perfect. He’s great. I want you to consider the prophet Joshua. This is the main passage I wanna direct your eyes to and I’ll begin to apply this to our life using this passage. The prophet Joshua in chapter five of Joshua, he’s about to embark on the greatest battle, his most famous battle of all time. He’s about to conquer Jericho. He’s still a rookie. He’s filling Moses’ shoes, his mentor, his friend. The commander of God’s army of Israel, Moses, is now gone and in chapter one it says, “Moses is gone, Joshua you’re now in charge.” So Joshua now is stepping forth to take command. He’s obeying everything that the Lord tells him to do. Doesn’t turn to the left or the right. He does exactly what God speaks of him to do.

And so he goes on with it all the way to the point that great things are happening including they’re able to celebrate the Passover in the Promised Land. They’re in the land of Canaan. They’re no longer celebrating the Passover with manna. You remember the Passover, right? The thing that happened back in Egypt where God saved His people, He passed over? They had celebrated for some 40 years using manna in the desert, but now for the first time they’re eating the fruits of the land of Canaan and enjoying this awesome meal.

Joshua knows things are going well for him. He knows God’s on his side. God promised His presence, but I imagine that now in verse 13 of Joshua chapter 5 we encounter this weary man, a man who knows he’s about to go into this great battle and isn’t quite sure how to do it. He knows God’s on his side and perhaps He assumes God to be like any other person, a side chooser, either for us or against us. But while he can hear the people back in camp celebrating that things are going well, the favor of God is with them, as he’s there on the arid plains of Jericho, he has this moment, maybe he’s praying, maybe he’s strategizing, I’m not sure exactly what he’s doing, but finally he’s encountered by someone. And in verse 13, we’ll pick it up there, it says, “Joshua was near Jericho. He looks up and he saw this man standing in front of him who had a drawn sword in his hand.”

And Joshua went to him and he asked, “Are you for us or are you for our enemy?” You can imagine that moment. He knows that the enemy is just over there. He can see the fortified city of Jericho. The Philistines want to kill them. The hearts of his enemy are melting within them because they see the favor of God upon Israel, but he knows people want to kill them, especially him. So he looks up and sees a man with his sword drawn. The natural thing to do is draw your own sword and then ask a question, “Are you gonna kill me? Are you for me or are you against me?” He just asks a simple question and he’s surprised by the answer.
The man didn’t hesitate. He keeps his sword drawn, his face firmly fixed on Joshua and he says, in verse 14, “Neither,” he replied. “But as commander of the Army of the Lord, I have now come.” Now, that’s just an odd answer. Which side are you on? Ours or theirs? It seems like God’s been fully on their side, so I would assume the right answer would be, “I’m on your side.” But the commander of the Lord’s army says, “Neither.” Neither. I’m not on either side. It’s as if it’s his way of saying, wrong question. You’re asking the wrong question. God is not like humans that He picks sides.

But Joshua’s limited human perspective had to go, “Well, listen, you gotta pick sides, you know. You’re either on my side or you’re on their side. Which side is it? And could you put that sword away? Because that’s freaking me out. Which side are you on?” And the guy just says, “Neither,” because God’s bigger than sides. God doesn’t engage in divine games of Red Rover, or capture the flag, or dodge ball. He doesn’t pick sides. In this moment he’s saying, “Listen, that battleground that you’re looking at, Joshua, in the distance? You know what? It’s under God’s divine control. I rule sovereignly over the enemy and over the Israelites. There’s no need to pick sides. There’s no need because I’m in control of both sides.”

Now, most scholars believe that this was a theophany or even a Christophany, a showing of the pre-incarnate Christ standing in front of Joshua. Can you imagine that? It makes sense to me that it could be a Christophany, that it could be Christ because He says He’s the commander of the Lord’s army. I think that’s Christ. We know from Romans 11:36 that all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him. So it would make sense to me that this is Christ now standing in front of Joshua and saying, “Listen, I don’t take sides. I follow the purposes of the Father. The Father is a sovereign over all things.” You see, Jesus doesn’t take sides. Jesus doesn’t act like us. Jesus is enough. The Gospel is enough.

So if you’re wondering, is God on my side or that person that I have a hard time with? You’re thinking of it wrong. You’re asking the wrong question. God’s sovereignly in control of everything and He’s saying get rid of your hobby case of preconceived notions and trust in God. And notice Joshua’s reaction. He falls on his face in worship. He presses his face against the dirt of the earth and worships. The end of verse 14 says, “Joshua fell down to the ground in reverence and asked him, ‘What message does my Lord have for His servant?’” What a humble response. And the commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandal for the place where you’re standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Friends, they’ll miss this. The exact phrase that was spoken to Moses in Exodus 3:5, before Moses had probably the biggest instance of his life of needing God’s presence as he goes to free the Israelites under Pharaoh’s control, God said to him, “I’m not giving you a plan. I’m not telling you what to do yet. I’m just calling you to take off your sandals and worship.” And as Joshua was about to go into the biggest battle he’s ever had, the command for him is take off your sandals and worship. Friends, don’t miss this. God is in control of the battlefield that’s in the far off distance or in this week for you. He’s in control of all of it, but what He’s asking of you is to trust Him.

He’s saying, “Just trust me.” May the posture of your heart be that you fall and you worship me, and you realize, as Craig’s series pointed out here in the last couple weeks, you were blowing kisses my direction, your worshipping me with your lips, and your attitude, and your heart. You are all about me and you understand that no matter what happens, I’m in control of the outcome. That I’m ruling the world with my feet up. Nothing freaks me out. I’m in control of both sides. Just trust me. If you didn’t hear anything I said this morning, I want you to hear this phrase, and if your neighbor’s been asleep, wake him up because they gotta get this phrase. This is the phrase I want you to leave with.

Here it is: God goes silent to gain our trust. God goes silent to gain our trust. I don’t know what you’re facing this week, but God does. He knows what your next Jericho is and so I say to you, how are you gonna respond to that? When the Lord is before you even this morning when you hit your face down on the ground or at least the posture of your heart be in total submission and humility to Him, and what you simply say with your words, what do you want me to do next? Or where you draw your sword of self-sufficiency and say, “Oh, no God. You just stand back. I got this one.” My hope is that you’ll trust the Lord with all your heart. Trust the Lord’s heart and when you do, hearing his voice is seemingly irrelevant. Can I ask you just to bow your heads and
Close your eyes for a moment?

Listen, I know the fact is that most people in this room at some point have felt abandoned, have felt betrayed, have felt manipulated by other people. And, friends, I know that we instinctively transfer our earthly hurts sometimes to our Heavenly Father. We assume that He has abandoned us or that He’s against us and that He pulls His presence away from us to teach us a lesson. But what if it’s actually to call us closer? My hope is that you will trust God with your fears, with your pains, and that you will realize that redirecting your feelings from the past towards God leads you to an inaccurate perception of who God really is. Friends, the Gospel is big enough. The gospel is good enough. The gospel is true enough. Jesus is the commander of the Lord’s army standing before your life saying, “Trust me.”

So I just wanna ask with heads bowed, if you’re in the middle of something, you feel like you need to just say, “I need to trust the Lord more,” I just want you to raise your hand. I just want you to raise your hand as a public display. I’m gonna pray for all you that raised your hand, it doesn’t matter who is around you or who does it and who doesn’t, just hold your hand up in the air. I’m gonna pray for you in a minute. If you say, “I need to trust the Lord more. I need the posture of my heart to be that of Joshua,” you just hold your hand high and let me pray for you.

Heavenly Father, you see these hands, you see those in this room who desperately need to trust you more in a situation in their life. And so, God, I’m praying boldly that you will speak, that you will not hold your peace, that you will not be still, but that you will move in their life to call them to greater trust. Father, I pray for all of us that we will be people that see the Gospel of Jesus Christ as enough, the presence of Christ in our life through the power of the Holy Spirit as more than enough. We love you, Father, and we trust your heart. It’s in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen, amen.