

JUNE 2022

June 1, 2022 Temptation

Readings for today: Proverbs 5-8

June 2, 2022 The Integrated Life

Readings for today: Proverbs 9-12

June 3, 2022 Righteousness

Readings for today: Proverbs 13-16

June 4, 2022 The Power of Words

Readings for today: Proverbs 17-20

June 6, 2022 Pride

Readings for today: Proverbs 21-24

June 7, 2022 Building God's House

Readings for today: 1 Kings 5-6, 2 Chronicles 2-3

June 8, 2022 A Model Prayer

Readings for today: 1 Kings 7-8, Psalms 11

June 9, 2022 Revival

Readings for today: 2 Chronicles 4-7, Psalms 134, 136

June 10, 2022 Give God the Praise He Deserves

Readings for today: Psalms 146-150

June 11, 2022 Define the Relationship

Readings for today: 1 Kings 9, 2 Chronicles 8, Proverbs 25-26

June 13, 2022 The Impact of Godly Leadership

Readings for today: Proverbs 27-29

June 14, 2022 Immortality

Readings for today: Ecclesiastes 1-6

June 15, 2022 Perspective

Readings for today: Ecclesiastes 7-12

June 16, 2022 The Love of Money

Readings for today: 1 Kings 10-11, 2 Chronicles 9, Proverbs 30-31

June 17, 2022 It's All About Me

Readings for today: 1 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 10

June 18, 2022 True Worship

Readings for today: 1 Kings 13-14, 2 Chronicles 11-12

June 20, 2022 Faith of our Fathers

Readings for today: 1 Kings 15:1-24, 2 Chronicles 13-16

June 21, 2022 Spiritual Entropy

Readings for today: 1 Kings 15:25-34, 1 Kings 16, 2 Chronicles 17

June 22, 2022 Miracles

Readings for today: 1 Kings 17-19

June 23, 2022 No Fear

Readings for today: 1 Kings 20-21

June 24, 2022 Singing our Faith

Readings for today: 1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18-20

June 25, 2022 Miracles: What's God's Point?

Readings for today: 2 Kings 1-4

June 27, 2022 One Person's Impact

Readings for today: 2 Kings 5-8:15

June 28, 2022 Generational Sin

Readings for today: 2 Kings 8:16-29, 2 Chronicles 21:1-22:9

June 29, 2022 Justice and Righteousness

Readings for today: 2 Kings 9-11, 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21

June 30, 2022 Covenantal Faithfulness

Readings for today: 2 Kings 12-13, 2 Chronicles 24

June 1 2022
Temptation

Readings for today: [Proverbs 5-8](#)

It begins with a thought. An attraction. A second glance. Something forbidden catches our attention and the enemy is right there. He's a smooth talker. Delighting in leading us astray. We take our eyes off of Jesus. The horizon shrinks to the immediate. We give no thought as to where this leads. We only feel the desire growing within us. If we could take a step back, we know where it will go. Nowhere. A dead end. So a battle ensues. A fight within. A struggle between life and death.

When Solomon describes the temptress, he's not just talking about sex. He's describing in great detail what takes place within the heart of every human being as they wrestle with sin. Our battle with sin is not rational. It doesn't take place in the mind so much as in the heart. The seat of our desires. And it is extremely difficult to resist. It's why Solomon encourages his son to stay as far away as possible. To avoid any situation where temptation may arise. "Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house..." (Prov. 5:8) Instead, he encourages him to focus on what he already has. What God has already given him. "Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well." (Prov. 5:15)

Unfortunately, we do not take Solomon's words to heart. We believe we can fly close to the sun. We believe we can walk right up to the edge without going over. "Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" (Prov. 6:27-28) Over and over again, I have seen this happen. Not just in my life but in the lives of so many I love and serve as pastor. Mistakes are made. Betrayals. Brokenness. And every time we talk it through. Trace it back. Untangle the mess. It begins with this attitude that we are somehow much stronger than we think. And that's why Solomon says, "He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray." (Prov. 5:23)

Resisting sin is part and parcel of the Christian life. The ancients called it the "mortification of the flesh." Paul talks about putting to death his fleshly desires. What does this look like in your life? And do you resist in faith or in your own strength? Friends, we cannot white-knuckle our sobriety. The only way to defeat temptation is to look to Christ. To focus all our attention and all our love and all our devotion on Him. When His love fills our hearts, there is no room for anything else.

Readings for tomorrow: Proverbs 9-12

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 2, 2022
The Integrated Life

Readings for today: Proverbs 9-12

“Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.” (Prov. 12:25)

I know so many who struggle with anxiety. They are young and old. They are male and female. They are black, white, and brown. They are rich and poor. Gay, straight, and bi. They come from all different backgrounds and life experiences. No one is immune. Many studies have been done attempting to pinpoint the source but the reality is there are a multiplicity of factors involved. For example, consider the factor of isolation. Despite tools like social media, people report feeling more disconnected than ever. Fewer and fewer report having a good friend. Someone they can call at 2AM if they have a need. This feeling of isolation leads to busyness as people fill up their schedules with all kinds of activities, longing to connect. But the opposite happens. The busier we become, the harder it is for us to connect and the more isolated we feel. Add to this all the stress we carry from our jobs, families, health, finances, etc. and it's actually not hard to see why we are so anxious.

Anxiety in a person's heart does indeed weigh them down. Saps them of their strength. Wears them out. Impacts their physical health. Their mental acuity. Their emotional stability. It hits every system in the body until we are debilitated. Unable to function on some level. So what's the answer? Walking in integrity. “Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.” (Prov. 10:9) Now, at first blush, that may seem strange. Doesn't integrity have to do with honesty? Are you suggesting if we just tell the truth, we'll all be okay? Certainly that's part of it. But integrity has a deeper meaning as well. Just as buildings have a “structural integrity” so do human beings. Strong lives are built on strong foundations. They are built on strong, godly habits that keep us secure. When we walk in integrity with the Lord, He becomes our stronghold. Our refuge. Our fortress. And we are able to put aside all anxious thoughts. When we make Christ the foundation of our life. When we build our daily lives around godly rhythms. Christ promises we will experience a peace that passes all understanding.

So what are some of those godly rhythms? What does it mean to live with integrity before the Lord? It starts with humility. Humble submission to Christ. Surrendering to His Lordship over our lives. On this foundation, we layer daily prayer and reflection in the Scriptures. We layer in weekly worship with our church family. We layer in regular intentional time with a few Christian friends. We layer in service to others. Giving ourselves away for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Spiritual disciplines such as these become the four walls of a spiritual house that is strong and firm and secure because it is built with the Lord.

Readings for tomorrow: Proverbs 13-16

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 3, 2022
Righteousness

Readings for today: Proverbs 13-16

I've been thinking a lot about righteousness the last few weeks especially as word went around that the Southern Baptist Church would release their long-awaited report on sexual abuse in the church. Commissioned last summer by delegates to their annual meeting, the independent investigation covers a twenty year period during which top denominational leaders suppressed abuse claims, rejected reform efforts, and dismissed victims and their families. Hundreds of abusers were identified, including past presidents, and yet it seems clear the leadership was more interested in avoiding liability rather than pursuing justice. Investigators interviewed 330 people, including 22 accusers, and were given access to literal mounds of data including email correspondence from survivors and denominational leaders. Tragically, the pattern that emerges is all too common. At least in my experience. Leaders close ranks, trying to protect the reputations of their friends as well as the institutions they lead. They are highly suspicious of any accusation and are more than willing to give abusers the benefit of the doubt. They refuse to be transparent about their practices and often try to operate in secret so they can control the flow of information. Perhaps most egregiously, they attack and blame the victims and their families in an effort to avoid accountability. None of this is unique to the Southern Baptists. The Roman Catholic Church is still attempting to redress their own hideous past as are many non-denominational evangelical churches whose leaders turned a blind eye to horrific abuse in their midst. Of course, the secular world has their own issues as well. Consider the abuse scandals that plague Hollywood or Washington D.C. or many corporate board rooms across America. It seems almost ubiquitous.

When will we ever learn? Our ways simply are not God's ways. Our ways are naturally corrupted by selfishness and greed which is why they always lead to death. (Prov. 14:12) Our ways seem right in our own eyes but God is constantly judging the intentions of our hearts. (Prov. 16:12) Do we somehow think God is blind to our sin? Do we think we can actually hide our wrongdoing from Him? What foolishness! (Prov. 15:3) No, the way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. (Prov. 15:9) His evil will become his undoing. (Prov. 14:32) In fact, the Lord refuses to have any association with wickedness and evil. (Prov. 15:29) He will not bless sin or abuse or lies or oppression. These things become a reproach and a shame to any church, organization, or nation who tolerates them. (Prov. 14:34)

So why do we keep falling into this trap? Why do these abuse cycles seem forever on repeat? When human beings abandon righteousness for the sake of power or greed or influence or a platform, they seemingly can justify just about anything. Our ability to sin is exceeded only by our ability to rationalize away such sin. The reality is we tend to tolerate certain levels of sin in our lives because to root them out would compromise our position or our lifestyle or our reputation and we simply refuse to let that happen. We circle the wagons. Retreat behind bureaucracy. Weaponize our policies and procedures. Lock down in self-protection mode. That's why God says, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues (or power or platform or influence) with injustice." We simply cannot have it both ways.

Read through today's chapters again. Take a look at how Solomon describes the life of the righteous. It's a life of peace and security. A life of honesty and transparency. A life of beauty and wisdom. A life that blesses others and is blessed by God. My prayer for all of us today is that we would hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God above all other worldly things.

Readings for tomorrow: Proverbs 17-20

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 4, 2022
The Power of Words

Readings for today: Proverbs 17-20

Words are powerful. They can be used to bless and build up. They can be used to comfort and encourage. They can be used to inspire and motivate. Sadly they can also be used to curse and tear down. They can be used to wound and discourage. They can be used to shame and condemn. The old adage, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” simply doesn’t pass muster. We’ve all been hurt by the things someone has said or left unsaid. We all carry deep wounds from things that were said to us as young children or young adults by those in authority in our lives. At the same time, we also can recall vivid memories when words were shared with us that left a positive impression. Words that healed or uplifted or perhaps even changed the course of our lives.

Today’s reading carries a strong warning to us to watch how we use our words. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” (Prov. 18:21) Normally when I read this verse and the many others like it that are sprinkled throughout the Scriptures, I think of rash words. Words said in anger. Words said in frustration. Words intended to hurt. Words used as weapons. Words said in ignorance. And I do believe these are exactly the kind of words Solomon is referring to when he writes things like, “A fool’s lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.” However, serving in an alternative cultural context recently reminded me of yet another layer of meaning.

When I am preparing for one of my trips, I usually have a few people ask me how I will communicate. They ask if the local church planters I train speak English. They do not. They ask me if I have learned to speak any of the local languages like Oromifa or Amharic. I have not with the exception of a few words like “hello” and “thank you.” They then ask about the interpreter and what that experience is like. It isn’t always easy. The challenge for the interpreter is not only communicate the words being spoken but the meaning being conveyed as well, all at the same emotional level as the original speaker. Whew! The best interpreters are able to do all three but it is a monumental challenge! My friend Behailu is one of the most brilliant I have met as are many of the other interpreters I’ve been blessed to have along the way.

The other thing I learn through this process is to confront my self-centeredness. When people ask about the translation process, I used to say, “They don’t speak English so I use an interpreter.” It’s a subtle but important nuance as basically I am saying “they” are lacking because “they” don’t speak my language so I must “help” them by getting an interpreter. Do you see how I’ve centered myself? The better and more humble way to put it would be to say, “I don’t speak Amharic or Oromifa so I need an interpreter.” This puts the focus back on my weakness as a monolingual American. Does that make sense?

Both my use of language and my self-centeredness can make or break a cross-cultural relationship. It’s only by the grace of God that my “mouth hasn’t invited a beating” on any number of occasions where I was culturally insensitive. And because I teach things like theology and leadership, I have marveled that my ignorance of local customs, lingual nuances, etc. doesn’t get more in the way. Again, all credit is due to the Holy Spirit as well as to the brilliance of the translators I get to work with when I am overseas.

The key to harnessing the power of the tongue is to bring every thought captive to Christ. To run every thought. Every emotion. Every idea we have through the grid that is Christ and ask ourselves if it

honors Him. Chances are high that we are truly seeking to honor Christ with our lips, we will not speak careless words. We will not cling to our cultural privilege. We will not center ourselves but rather center Christ in our relationships. We will not throw gasoline on the fire of a conflict but instead use gentle words to turn away wrath. We will speak positive words to bring hope. Loving words to ward off hate. You see, the power of the tongue works both ways. It can be used for good as much as evil. It can uplift as much as it tears down. In my experience, simply using my words to bless others makes a huge impact. How can you use your words today to bring about the blessing of God in someone's life?

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 6, 2022

Pride

Readings for today: Proverbs 21-24

“Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin... “Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.” (Prov. 21:4, 24)

There is no greater sin than pride. Pride lies at the root of all sin. It was pride caused Satan to fall from grace and glory when the heavens were young. It was pride that caused Adam and Eve to reject God’s command and go their own way. Cain’s pride was wounded so he killed Abel. It was Joseph’s pride that got him in trouble with his brothers. In his pride, Moses thought he could deliver Israel without God. Saul, in his pride, refused to make right sacrifices. David’s pride caused him to number Israel so he could see how powerful he was. Solomon, in his pride, thought he could worship lots of different gods and still remain faithful to Yahweh. Over and over again in the Scriptures, we see pride creep up in God’s people with devastating effect.

Pride is still our greatest sin. Pride makes us think we know best how to live our lives. Pride makes us think we can stand in judgment over God’s Word and determine what is relevant. Pride makes us think we are like God, discerning good from evil. But how’s that working out? When we look at the world around us, is it not pride that is the root cause of the violence? The suffering? The pain? Is it not the pride of nations that causes them to go to war? Is it not the pride of privilege that causes some to look down on others? Is it not the pride of wealth that causes us to accumulate more and more while others go without? Is it not pride that drives our decision-making on a daily basis? We do what’s best for us first without a thought for others. Haughty. Proud. Wicked. Scoffer. Arrogant. These are the labels God uses for us when we fall into this trap.

So what’s the answer? Humility. Not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. Or less of ourselves than we ought. But simply thinking of ourselves less. When we think of ourselves “less.” When we consider others before we consider ourselves. When we have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus who – though He was God – did not consider His prerogatives as God something to hold onto. We begin to become humble. We take on the form of a servant. We begin to look like Jesus. And humility comes with its own reward. “The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.” (Prov. 22:4) God blesses the humble. God blesses those who put Him first. Who put others first. He grants them His favor and they often find the very things they were chasing so hard after coming into their life. The difference, of course, is that these things no longer have any hold on us because Christ now has the tighter grip.

So are you a humble person? Are you the kind of person who needs compliments? Needs to be told how good you are? Are you the kind of person who hates compliments? Hate it when you are recognized for something you did? Both are signs of pride, friends. Are you the kind of person who receives rebuke? Correction? Critique? Or do you grow resentful and angry? Are you the kind of person who crumbles at the first sign of disapproval? All are signs of pride, friends. God wants you to think of yourself less. The truly humble person accepts honor and praise for the things they do well because they recognize God has blessed them. The truly humble person is generous with praise of others. Looks for opportunities to build others up. To spread the praise while taking responsibility for any failures. The truly humble person rejects any attempt of the enemy to make them feel worthless, afraid, or of less value in the eyes of God. A truly humble person is free because they do not live for praise nor in fear of praise. So are you a humble person? Pray for God to show you the way.

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 5-6, 2 Chronicles 2-3

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 7, 2022
Building God's House

Readings for today: 1 Kings 5-6, 2 Chronicles 2-3

“Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel.”
(1 Kings 6:12-13)

We recently remodeled our sanctuary. It was a big project. It required a significant investment of time, energy, and resources. The process from beginning to end spanned a couple of years. It required a design team, architect, construction firm, A/V integrators, and scores of volunteers. As we prayerfully sought God's will for the space, we recognized that it would be so easy to give into the temptation to follow current cultural trends. Eliminate everything distinctive about our worship space. Get rid of key elements like the cross or the table or the baptismal font so we didn't offend non-believers. At the same time, we also recognized our need to “translate” our worship experience for the next generation. A generation of digital natives. A generation who will seamlessly interact online and in person. As much as we might wish it were otherwise, livestream worship is now a required feature for any church seeking to reach the lost in their community. It is the new “front door” of the church. All of these factors came into play as we came before the Lord in prayer. More than anything else, we wanted the new space to reflect the glory and wonder and beauty and majesty of God. We wanted to make sure that the worship that took place in our space aligned with His revealed will for His people. For we want God to come and dwell with us. We want God to come and meet with us. We want God to root and establish us for many generations to come. It's a huge ask and yet we believe with all our hearts that it is God's desire for us.

Solomon believed the same. He knew the magnitude of what he was building. How in the world could any house built with human hands contain the Lord of the universe? How in the world could all the wealth of such a house reflect the fullness of God's glory? How in the world could any one man - even if he were the richest king on earth - accomplish such a significant project? Listen to how he describes the nature of his work, “The house I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods. But who is able to build Him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain Him? Who am I to build a house for Him, except as a place to make offerings before Him?” (2 Chronicles 2:5-6) Clearly, Solomon was humbled by the work he was being called to do. He was daunted by the great task his father David had left to him. And yet he trusted God was with Him. He trusted God to guide Him and provide for Him. He knew the Lord loved His people and desired to dwell among them. As God had already declared so many times before, “He would be their God, they would be His people.”

In a very real sense, all of us are engaged in the work of building God a house. We are building for glory or for ruin in the way we choose to live our lives. If we walk in God's ways and live according to His commands and love His Word, He will establish us. He will come to dwell with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. If we invite Him into our homes, into our families, and into our work; He promises to do great things in and through us. He promises to help us build lives that are strong and secure. Lives that can withstand any storm that may come because they are founded on the rock that is Jesus Christ. Is this daunting? Yes. Is it humbling to think that God would be that interested in how we conduct ourselves day to day? You bet. It's a huge task. One that will require all our focus and time and attention and resources if we are to be successful. But is this not our chief end? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever? As such, it will be worth every effort we expend.

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 7-8, Psalms 11

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 8, 2022
A Model Prayer

Readings for today: 1 Kings 7-8, Psalms 11

The prayer of King Solomon at the dedication of the Temple is one of my favorites in all of Scripture. It's serves as a great model for us as we think about our own prayer life. It begins with an ascription of praise for who God is and a recognition that He is utterly transcendent.

"O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart..." (1 Kings 8:23) Solomon acknowledges the greatness of God. His majesty. His glory. His splendor. He is not just one among many gods. He is alone is the true God of the heavens and the earth. He is also a God defined by faithfulness. Eternal loyalty. Steadfast love for His covenant people who are the humble recipients of His blessing. This attitude is truly the starting point of prayer. Prayer must begin with an understanding of who God is and who we are. We are not the same. We are not on the same level. God is the shepherd and we are the sheep. God is the potter and we are the clay. God is the king and we are his servants. Prayer place us in a humble position before the Lord. This is the ONLY posture one can take when they come before God in prayer.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day..." (1 Kings 8:27-28) As we come humbly before the Lord, we are assured of His promise to hear us. To listen. To attend to our prayers. God hears every word. Every cry. He sees every tear. He knows the secret thoughts of our hearts and He delights when we bring those before Him openly and honestly. Solomon makes it clear that the Temple's primary purpose is to serve as a house for prayer. A place where Israel can come before God and lay their requests before Him.

God not only listens to our requests, He also hears our confession. Throughout this prayer, Solomon acknowledges the inescapable reality of sin. It is ubiquitous. It is endemic. It is simply part of who we are as God's people. So when a man or woman sins. When God's people sin collectively. Whether against neighbor or friend. Through systems of oppression or abuse. When Israel suffers defeat at the hands of their enemies or the rains are shut up in the heavens or famine strikes the land. In those moments, if Israel will humble themselves and pray and seek God's face, God promises to hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land. He promises to "hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know..." (1 Kings 8:39)

God will do all these things in such a way as to make His name great upon the earth. Even in Solomon's prayer, there is a missional, outward-facing component. "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name." (1 Kings 8:41-43) God desires to fill the earth with His glory. Israel is called to serve this very purpose. In the way Israel orders her life and faithfully serves her Lord, she will be a witness to the nations and to all of creation of the steadfast love of God.

You can see why I love this prayer so much! As I said above, it is a great model for us to follow in our own lives as we ponder and reflect on our relationship with God. Because of Christ, Christians have access to the Father in ways Solomon, in all his wisdom, could never have imagined! Because Christ sits at the Father's right hand interceding for us continually, the door is always open. The way to the Holy of Holies always clear. We have a standing invitation to come before our Heavenly Father with the blessed assurance He will always listen. When you pray, pray with this eternal promise firmly fixed in your mind and heart.

Readings for tomorrow: 2 Chronicles 4-7, Psalms 134, 136

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 9, 2022
Revival

Readings for today: 2 Chronicles 4-7, Psalms 134, 136

“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chron. 7:14)

What will it take to win our nation to Christ? I’ve spent countless hours praying over and pondering this question. I’ve traveled the world and asked this same question of believers in different countries, some far more hostile to the gospel than my own. I’ve watched different Christians in different places use different methods as they sought to win their nation for Jesus. Some use politics. Some use social protest. Some seek to leverage wealth and power. Some seek to build a platform and become an influencer.

The most effective method by far happens to be the most ancient. The most biblical. Plant churches. Evangelize the lost. Serve the world with humility, sacrificial love, and an abundance of grace. The time I spent in Ethiopia recently only reinforced this truth for me. As we meet with indigenous denominational leader after indigenous denominational leader, we hear the same thing. They each love their nation. They have a passion to see their people come to Christ. They are united in their efforts to reach the lost. So what are they doing? They are praying fervently. They are sending church planters to some of the hardest to reach areas of their country. Regions where warfare has recently raged. Regions where there is famine and potential starvation. Regions where there is tribal unrest. No hardship is too great. No suffering too much to endure. They “count everything as loss when compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ” and they are winning a nation to Him as a result.

Imagine what could happen if the US church would rediscover a similar passion? Imagine what could happen if believers in the US developed a passion for evangelism? Committed their time and resources and energies to planting churches in neighborhoods where there is no gospel presence? Imagine if we could put aside our denominational differences? Humbly repent of our sin? Imagine if instead of seeking to dominate, we instead sought to serve? After all, it is God’s steadfast love - “hesed” in the original Hebrew - that leads to repentance and revival.

Do you pray for revival? Revival in God’s Church? Revival in our nation? Revival in your own heart? For years now, this verse from 2 Chronicles has been lifted up as the model prayer for revival. So how do we put it into practice? We humble ourselves. Before the Lord. Before each other. Before the world. We are broken people. We are sinful people. We have no right to claim any moral high ground. We ask God to continue His sanctifying work in us. We beg the Holy Spirit to give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand the mind of Christ. We seek God’s face. We stop believing the world revolves around us. We stop treating God like some on-call, cosmic concierge whose only purpose for existence is to meet our emotional needs. We stop treating worship like a consumer product and instead give God the worship He deserves in the way He demands. And finally, we turn from our wicked ways. We come clean. We confess. We repent. We make ourselves vulnerable and transparent before God, before each other, and before the world. Most importantly, we do these things authentically with no other agenda than to come clean before our Heavenly Father.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 146-150

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 10, 2022
Give God the Praise He Deserves

Readings for today: Psalms 146-150

I love these final Psalms. They extol the greatness of God. I can imagine all of Israel gathered at the Temple singing them at the top of their lungs. Wave after wave of sound ascending to the heavens. Their hearts on fire. Their passion for God enflamed. Their love for Him crescendoing. Their worship overwhelming the senses. It's a powerful thing to witness.

As many of you know, I get the privilege of traveling to the Horn of Africa a couple of times a year. I love worshipping with my African brothers and sisters. Worship for them is a whole body experience. Dancing. Swaying. Clapping. They sing without any sense of self-conscious pride. No insecurities at all. No worries about the number of verses or choruses on repeat. No debates over personal preference. They simply sing from their hearts. Their joy is palpable. They love singing together. They love being together. They love worshipping before the Lord. It is powerful.

Like Israel, they praise the God "who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin." (Psalms 146:7-9) They recount God's goodness. They praise God's greatness. They sing about God's provision. God's protection. God's miraculous healing. God's deliverance from evil.

Like Israel, they praise the God who "determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure...He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry...He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes...He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow." (Psalms 147:4-5, 8-9, 16, 18) During the rainy season they experience the tangible blessing of abundant water flowing, bringing life to their dry land. Flowers bloom. Crops flourish. Herds increase. The grasslands become rich and full and green.

Like Israel, they know when they praise their God, they are joining their voices with the heavens and the earth. The heavenly host and the saints who have gone before them. They join the great cloud of witnesses around the throne of God to give Him the worship due His Holy Name. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!" (Psalms 148:1-4)

I hope and pray for the day when our churches in the West can abandon themselves to worship in the way Israel once did! I hope and pray for the day when we can put aside all pretense and pride and self-consciousness and insecurity and consumeristic thoughts and attitudes and worship God like our African brothers and sisters! I long for the day when we would come face to face with our God. Honor Him for who He is. Worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. Give Him the praise He deserves. The worship He demands. Fall on our faces before His throne, casting all our crowns before Him. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 9, 2 Chronicles 8, Proverbs 25-26

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 11, 2022

Define the Relationship

Readings for today: 1 Kings 9, 2 Chronicles 8, Proverbs 25-26

There comes a point in time in all relationships where you have to sit down and define the boundaries. You have talk through expectations and conditions and terms. You have to spell out what is in bounds and what is out of bounds. My wife and I went out on our first date on November 9th, 1993. We talked for hours at an 24 hour diner over coffee. We shared testimonies. We shared our hopes and dreams for the future. We had instant chemistry and connection. As we were driving home, I felt it necessary to clarify some things. I told Kristi we should date for six weeks and then re-evaluate to see how we were feeling. If we felt like things were going well, we'd get serious. If not, we'd part ways. To show you what kind of fool I was at the time, I actually said to her, "If we part ways, let's not try to be friends. I have enough friends." Can you imagine? Thankfully, Kristi was already learning to tune me out! Ha! One week later, I fell in love with her and the rest is history. So much for my grand plan!

As I mentioned above, all relationships need definition. All relationships need boundaries if they are to thrive. This includes our relationship with God. Listen again to how He defines things for Solomon. "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the Lord has brought all this disaster on them.' (1 Kings 9:3-9) God leaves nothing to the imagination. He is very clear with Solomon. Walk faithfully and you will be blessed. Walk unfaithfully and you will be cursed. These are the conditions of the covenant God first made with his father, David. And tragically, Solomon fails to live up to them. The result is national division and civil war.

What about us? We live under the "new covenant" established in Christ's blood. The relationship we have with God is decidedly one-sided. He sets the conditions but He also bears the consequences. He too wants us to walk in faithfulness but He has chosen never to reject us even when we are unfaithful. Instead, He takes the punishment we deserve. He accepts the wages of our sin. Therefore, instead of "everyone passing by" being astonished at our ruin, they gaze upon the Crucified One in astonishment at His great love. Does this mean we get to live without boundaries? Does this mean we can ignore His expectations? Dismiss His commands? Absolutely not. There are natural consequences for sin that we must bear. There are natural repercussions for sin that ripple out to those around us. God will never break His promise to us. He will never abandon His covenant with His people. He will never walk out on the relationship but He will – in His steadfast lovingkindness and patience – bear with us when we suffer for our transgressions. Do not take God's love for granted. Do not presume upon His grace. Heed the warning He gives to King Solomon and commit your way to Him.

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 13, 2022
The Impact of Godly Leadership

Readings for today: [Proverbs 27-29](#)

I remember vividly staring at my ballot in 2020. I had done my research on each candidate. Studied each party platform. Read through all the ballot initiatives. And I found myself deeply conflicted. I remember thinking to myself, “This is the best we can do? 330 million people in the United States and this is the best we can come up with? Where are the godly leaders? Those who pursue righteousness and justice? Those who love mercy and walk in humility? Those who think not of themselves but have a heart to serve?” Perhaps it is my natural cynicism speaking but I get tired of picking the “lesser of two evils.” I get tired of electing leaders who I know will not be up to the task. I get tired of exercising my right to vote and then “groaning” for the next several years under the rule of the “wicked.” Please hear my heart. I am not asking for perfect leaders. There is no such thing this side of heaven. I am simply asking for leaders who have a heart for God. Leaders who reflect the character of God. Leaders who listen to God and seek His wisdom in the decisions they make. Sadly, they are few and far between.

Such has always been the case. Even in Israel. Why else do we see the same proverbs repeated over and over again in different forms? “An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked.” (Proverbs 29:27) “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.” (Proverbs 29:2) “When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, people hide themselves.” (Proverbs 28:12) Solomon understands the impact of righteousness on a nation. He understands Israel’s greatest need is godly leadership. Leaders who go hard after God are a community’s most precious resource. This is true at all levels of society. It starts in the home with godly parents. It extends into the local community with godly business leaders. Churches need godly pastors. All levels of government need godly politicians. (Just the fact that you probably think “godly politician” is an oxymoron is telling.) When our leaders are righteous, we rejoice in triumph and great glory. When our leaders are unrighteous, we groan and hide ourselves. This is simply the natural way of things.

So what do we do? First, we pray. We ask God to raise up godly leaders in the next generation to send to places like the White House, the United States Congress, the governor’s mansion and state courthouse, even our local town council. Second, we get to work. We raise up godly children and grandchildren. We make disciples who make disciples in the church. We get involved in our communities and hold our leaders accountable. We cling to righteousness ourselves even as we demand it from others. Finally, we vote. We get involved. We advocate for righteous public policy. We run for office. We flood the open government positions with godly men and women who will use their influence to chart a more righteous course. In short, we do all we can to make a difference for Jesus in our world.

Readings for tomorrow: Ecclesiastes 1-6

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 14, 2022
Immortality

Readings for today: Ecclesiastes 1-6

I recently had a conversation with one of my kids where they shared their desire to be remembered. We were walking off the USS Missouri having spent the last couple of hours reading through all the history associated with that particular ship. I think they were deeply impacted by all the stories they read and the life histories of some of the sailors who served and sacrificed and they found themselves drawn to something deeper. A desire for significance. A desire for something more out of this life than the pursuit of pleasure or wealth or fame or influence. It was an interesting conversation on a number of levels. This is a kid who has chased the vanity of pleasure. The vanity of wealth. The vanity of self-indulgence. This is a kid who has come to the end of those things pretty quickly, all things considered, and has discovered the truth of what Solomon shares with us today. “All is vanity and a striving after wind.” (Ecc. 1:14) It is cool to have a front row seat as they grow and mature and think deeply about the meaning of life.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is a challenging read. Solomon pulls no punches as he names the idols of our lives. The pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. The pursuit of self-indulgence and pleasure. The pursuit of living responsibly and hard work. The pursuit of wealth and honor. All these pursuits ultimately end in dust. A generation comes and a generation goes and the hard reality is that all of us are forgotten so quickly. How many of us actually know much about our great-grandparents? How many of us can even recall their names off the tops of our heads? What about our grandparents? How many of us know their stories? It’s sobering to think about how quickly and easily we forget. Surely Solomon is right. Only the earth remains forever. There is no remembrance of former things. There will be no remembrance of later things. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.

And yet, do we not all long to be remembered? Is there not something deep inside all of us that longs for such recognition? Not out of pride but simply out of desire to not be forgotten? Solomon is clear that God has set eternity in each person’s heart and I believe this longing is a reflection of that truth. When my child tells me they want to be remembered, they are tapping into a longing God has placed deep within them. It’s a good desire, even a godly one. And the glorious truth is when we fear God - which is where Solomon ultimately lands - and we live our lives for Him, all our works follow us. They endure throughout eternity. Though the memories of human beings are short, God’s memory is long. He will not forget what we have done. He will not forget what we have sacrificed. He will not forget what we have accomplished. I love how Revelation 14:13 puts it, “I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.”

So back to my conversation with my kid. As we walked off the ship, we talked at length about the people we do remember and why we remember them. Typically, it’s because they’ve made a great sacrifice for a cause greater than themselves. The men and women who served over the years on the USS Missouri gave their lives for the cause of freedom. They fought against tyranny and injustice. The same is true for those who died on the USS Arizona which we visited later that day. The same is true for the martyrs I’ve met and prayed with in the Horn of Africa. Men and women who willingly give their lives to spread the gospel. And the same is true for me. It is highly unlikely I will be asked to become a martyr for my faith. At the same time, does not Christ command me to lay my life down daily for His sake? In this way, are not all Christians called to a life of sacrifice to a cause greater than ourselves? The cause of the Kingdom?

Readings for tomorrow: Ecclesiastes 7-12

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 15, 2022
Perspective

Readings for today: Ecclesiastes 7-12

It's never easy to feel under attack. Never easy to have your integrity questioned. Never easy to feel falsely accused or have your reputation trashed or your character assassinated. The last two years have been some of the hardest I've experienced in ministry. The amount of pressure on pastors and other ministry leaders has been enormous. And I know we are not alone. Teachers, healthcare workers, first responders, political leaders, basically anyone in the public eye has felt the stress of being caught in the cultural crossfire. COVID, ethnic tension, economic uncertainty, a brutal political season that never seems to end...the list goes on and on. As the pressure increased, families and friendships were torn apart. Tight-knit church families experienced splits. Formerly fruitful business relationships came to an end. People began buckling under the stress, left jobs they once loved, and started over. It's not been an easy road. If recent polls are correct, almost 40% of pastors have seriously considered leaving ministry altogether due to the pain of the past season. Thankfully, I do not count myself among them though I know many who do. It's heartbreaking.

Now just because I haven't considered leaving the ministry doesn't mean I haven't experienced pain. I've had my integrity questioned. Close friends broke off our relationship due to the choices I made during COVID. Families that I poured my heart and soul into left our church without a word. Brothers and sisters in Christ that I had prayed over, walked alongside during crises, married, baptized, you name it ghosted me and it hurt. In some cases, I heard through the grapevine some of the things they were saying about me in the community. Little of which was true. It didn't feel good. So what kept me from becoming completely discouraged? What kept me from joining the ranks of those who felt like they needed to pack it in? I think it's what Solomon shares here in Ecclesiastes.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting...sorrow is better than laughter...the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (Ecc. 7:2-4) Perspective. This is what has saved me. God's perspective. Reframing my experience in light of the suffering I have experienced in my own life as well as the incredible suffering I have seen around the world. The reality is I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death. I know the way well. Almost fifteen years ago, the shadow of death fell over my marriage and family. The shadow of death fell over my career. My life was in a death spiral of my own making and when I finally hit rock bottom, I found Jesus waiting there for me. Perspective. Once or twice a year, I am blessed to go to Africa. I get to spend time with the persecuted church. I've personally met and gotten to know martyrs. The suffering these brothers and sisters endure for the sake of Christ is overwhelming. Still they find joy. Still they experience peace. Perspective. It's all about perspective.

Many years ago, someone shared a great quote with me from Charles Spurgeon. "If anyone thinks ill of you, do not despair. You are far worse than they could ever imagine!" ;-) I chuckle every time I think of it. It helps me hold onto perspective. The reality is life is in this world is hard. Jesus promised as much. In this world we will face trials. In this world we will undergo tribulation. The only thing that gives us hope in the face of all we have suffered is that Jesus has overcome the world.

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 10-11, 2 Chronicles 9, Proverbs 30-31

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 16, 2022
The Love of Money

Readings for today: 1 Kings 10-11, 2 Chronicles 9, Proverbs 30-31

“Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the Lord?” or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” (Proverbs 30:8-9)

Today demonstrates why it is so good to read the Bible chronologically. Juxtaposing these verses from Proverbs over and against the reign of Solomon provides a striking image for us to reflect on. We tend to think of wealth as a blessing from God. We rejoice when our ship comes in. We are thankful to live in beautiful homes. Drive nice cars. Take nice vacations. Build plenty of wealth to retire on and enjoy the twilight years of life. What we fail to consider are the very real spiritual dangers that accompany such wealth. After all, Jesus wasn’t joking when He said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:25)

Solomon was fabulously wealthy. During his reign, Israel enjoyed a period of great peace and prosperity. The economy was strong. Unemployment was down. Silver was so plentiful it ceased to hold any value. His annual income was astronomical. 666 talents of gold equals almost 40,000 pounds of gold each year. An ounce of gold on the current market is almost \$1,300 dollars. $\$1300 \times 16 \times 40,000 = \832 million dollars per year! Incredible! No wonder he overlaid everything with gold! No wonder he sat on an ivory throne! But with all that wealth came temptation. The temptation to become self-sufficient. The temptation to become self-reliant. The temptation to forget God as the One from whom all blessings flow. And that’s exactly what happened. Solomon forgot God. Influenced by his foreign wives, he began building shrines to different gods. Trusting in his own strength, he failed to see the danger before it was too late. Unlike his father David, there is no indication in Scripture that Solomon ever repented of his sin. And though he finished his reign in relative peace, the nation would fracture after his son came to the throne.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” (1 Timothy 6:10) It is often said that money itself is not evil but only the love of money. This is true. However, I am a sinner. My heart is naturally oriented away from God and toward myself. Because of my fallen condition, when you put a dollar in my hand, I tend to fall in love with it. I almost cannot help myself. The more I have, the more I want. It becomes an almost insatiable appetite.

Now consider where I live. Douglas County routinely ranks among the wealthiest counties in the country. The average household income is well above six figures. This places us in the top one percent of the world’s wealthiest people. In fact, if you want to find out where you land, head over to “How Rich Am I?” and plug in your income. It will ballpark you against the rest of the world and the results may surprise you. Hopefully, they will humble you because we always have tendency to compare ourselves with those who have more than us not less. And while there are great blessings that come with such wealth, as I said above, there is also great danger. Just like Solomon, we too have a tendency to forget God. We have a tendency to be self-reliant. Self-sufficient. Self-dependent. And this results in high rates of depression, anxiety, addiction, and suicidal ideation because we simply were not designed to bear the burdens of this life without God. So where then can we find hope? If it will be harder for us to get into God’s Kingdom than a camel through the eye of a needle, then what chance do we really have? Thankfully, with God all things are possible! Our only hope is to repent of our natural, selfish greed and turn back to Him. We must give sacrificially and generously of our wealth so that it loosens its grip on us. This is God’s antidote that saves us from falling in love with money.

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 10

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 17, 2022
It's All About Me

Readings for today: 1 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 10

We live in a narcissistic age. The focus is all on “me.” It shapes the way we work. The way we live. The way we relate to others. Millions of dollars are being spent every year by advertisers and the media to convince us that “we” are the center of the universe. Our needs are what are most important. We deserve more. We are worth more. We are owed more. The messaging is endless. Relentless. Ubiquitous. It’s impossible to escape. The impact is devastating and wide-ranging. Entitlement affects our families, neighborhoods, little leagues, schools, businesses, churches, politics, you name it. Entitlement is the source of the “culture of outrage” one experiences on cable news and social media. Entitlement creates and reinforces divisions in our country because the grand American experiment was founded on the principle of self-sacrifice. But to the entitled, sacrifice is a foreign concept. Serving others is anathema. Giving oneself away is not in the vocabulary.

Solomon is dead. The wisest and most powerful king Israel has ever known is no longer on the throne. It’s Rehoboam’s time. Will he unite the nation? Clearly the opportunity is there. “Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.” (1 Kings 12:1) All Israel showed up with the intent of making him king. This is his moment. All he has to do is reach out and capture it. The people even show him the way. Lighten our load a bit. Give us some rest. Your father worked us hard and we need a break. Do this and we will serve you. The wise counselors his father relied on for advice agree. “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” (1 Kings 12:7) Serve the people. Bless them. Honor them. Do right by them. If you will do this, they will serve you forever. But Rehoboam feels entitled. We don’t know his inner thoughts but I imagine he desired to do even greater things than his father. He aspired to an even greater fame. Greater glory. He doesn’t want to serve the people. They exist to serve him. This is the essence of the advice of his peers. Don’t show weakness. Don’t give an inch. Show them you’re twice the man your father was. It is better to be feared than to be loved. “My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” (1 Kings 12:10-11) You owe me, Israel. I demand you serve me. I demand you submit to me. I demand you love me. The result? Outrage. Rebellion. Division. The fracturing of a once great nation.

Do you struggle with entitlement? When your child is benched at a game, do you automatically assume he or she has been unfairly treated? When they come home complaining about their teacher, do you automatically assume the teacher has it out for them? When you are passed over for the promotion at work, do you assume something nefarious about the decision? When you hear politicians from the other political party speak, do you assume the worst about their intentions? When you are disappointed at church, do you gossip and spread rumors? Such attitudes and actions betray a sinful sense of entitlement that needs to be confessed before the Lord.

Repentance in this area is critically important. Repentance replaces entitlement with a servant-heart. A heart that longs to serve others rather than be served. Husbands lay down your lives for your wives. Wives serve your husbands. Fathers, don’t exasperate your children. Serve them as unto the Lord. Employers, don’t treat your employees as commodities to be used but honor them as co-laborers in the work you are doing. Employees seek to serve your employers with a gracious heart and be thankful for the job they provide. Teachers, serve your students. Students, serve your teachers and understand they are there because they have your best in mind. Coaches, serve your players. Do everything you can to

further their athletic careers. Players trust your coaches. Put the good of the team above your own success. Politicians, work not for the good of your party but for the good of our nation. Church leaders, seek first the Kingdom of God and do all you can to help those God has entrusted to your care to grow in their relationship with Jesus.

Entitlement poisons everything it touches. A servant-heart blesses everything it touches. Where do you find yourself today?

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 13-14, 2 Chronicles 11-12

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 18, 2022
True Worship

Readings for today: 1 Kings 13-14, 2 Chronicles 11-12

God cares about our worship. He expects, even demands, His people worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. He expects us to enter into worship focused solely on bringing honor and glory to Him alone. Worship that honors God is faithful to Scripture. Music that honors God has little to do with style and everything to do with the words being sung. Prayers that honor God are humble and contrite. Liturgy that honors God connects us with the saints who have gone before us and we join them even as they worship now around God's throne. Preaching that honors God comes straight from the Bible and has little use for human opinion. The way we shape our spaces and gatherings and experiences in worship is critical and must be focused on drawing us close to God and to each other. All of these things have been hallmarks of worship for God's people down through the ages going all the way back to ancient Israel. And while the ceremonial laws governing worship surely have changed - and even been fulfilled in Christ - it still doesn't release us from the responsibility of giving God the worship He deserves and demands. Anything less and we run the risk of engaging in what the Bible calls "abomination."

"Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings." (1 Kings 12:25-33)

Yesterday, we read about Rehoboam's folly as he refused to listen to wise counselors and instead took his advice from fools. The result was the dividing of a nation. God had ordained Jeroboam to take over the northern kingdom of Israel. Ten tribes were entrusted into his hands. God was with him. God had established him. God had raised him up to be king. But Jeroboam was scared. Afraid of what might happen if his people returned to Jerusalem for worship. He was afraid their hearts would return to the house of David and he would lose his kingdom. So makes a tragic mistake. Rather than trust God, he creates his own system of worship. Rather than give God the worship He deserves and demands, Jeroboam makes idols. Establishes his own priesthood. Built his own temples and high places. Established his own feasts. To be sure, these things paralleled the system laid out in Scripture. They had the same forms and functions. They seem to accomplish the same purpose which was the worship of Yahweh. But they were not the same and the consequence for falsely worshipping Yahweh is utter destruction. The northern kingdom of Israel will be wiped off the map. The people will be scattered, never to return. It's a painful reminder of how deeply God cares about His own glory. Worship is about Him, not about us.

This story serves as a sobering reminder of how dangerous it is to bring our personal preferences into worship. This is something that afflicts so many churches in America today. I can't tell you the number of conversations I've had over the years about the style of music, the shape of the liturgy, the personality of the preacher, the color of the carpet in the sanctuary, you name it. I can't tell you the number of preachers I know who uncritically adopt secular communication methods, employ gimmicks, or even seek to manipulate the worship experience in order to elicit a particular emotional response. Worship is not entertainment. It's not a TED talk. It's not a concert. It's not a spectator sport. It's not a religious "good" or "service" that we consume. Worship is about God. It's about coming before God and offering all that we are and all that we have back to Him. It's about gathering with God's people to offer praise and thanksgiving for what He has done. Worship happens under trees, in dark basements under threat of persecution, in soaring cathedrals, auditoriums filled with the latest and greatest technology, humble storefronts, living rooms, or simple sanctuaries all across the globe. Worship is accompanied with organ, guitars, drums, keys, and most of all, the human voice. It doesn't have to be on key. The amplification doesn't always have to work. The songs may be strange or unfamiliar. All that matters is that the music leads us to God. Worship is led by preachers and pastors and priests and laypeople who do their best to interpret God's Word. They may be young or old. Dynamic or dull. Humorous or boring. Energetic or lethargic. The main point is that they speak God's truth to God's people to the best of their limited ability. This is true worship and anything less runs the risk of falling under God's judgment.

So let me be a little bold. If you find yourself in worship thinking about how much you hate the music and refuse to sing...you are in sin. If you find yourself dis-engaged in worship as the gospel is being preached...you are in sin. If the primary reason you attend church is to be entertained or to be emotionally moved...you are in sin. If you jump from church to church without ever committing your gifts, talents, wealth, and abilities to a local church family...you are in sin. If you go to church to "be fed" rather than to give God the honor and praise He deserves...you are in sin. If you attend worship flippantly, casually, or only when it's convenient for your schedule...you are in sin. You must repent. You must ask God to forgive you and grant you a heart for true worship. Neglecting the worship of the Living God is serious, friends. Make sure your heart is right before God.

Readings for tomorrow: None

[**Back To Table Of Contents**](#)

June 20, 2022
Faith of our Fathers

Readings for today: 1 Kings 15:1-24, 2 Chronicles 13-16

Yesterday was Father's Day. A day we take time to celebrate our fathers and what they mean to us. For some it is a day of celebration. They've been blessed to have a great dad. Perhaps even a godly dad. A dad who poured his life into them. A dad who provided for them. A dad who served them. A dad who taught them about Jesus. For others, it's a painful day. They don't have a great dad. Their dad walked out on them. Their dad abused them. Their dad cursed them. Their dad certainly didn't teach them about the love of Jesus. For still others, it's a bittersweet day. They've lost their dad. They miss his wisdom and advice. They miss his hugs and affection. They miss his faithful presence. Fathers serve a special role in our lives. They have a high calling which is to do their best to reflect the character of their Heavenly Father to their children. So many kids form their view of God based on their relationship with their dad.

I thought about the power of fathers as I read our text for today. As we read deeper into the histories of God's people, you will begin to see patterns emerge. Some kings are faithful and accomplish great things for God. Some kings are faithless and fall under His judgment. All of them are a mixed bag to some extent, seeking God faithfully at times and falling short at other times. We've already seen this reflected in the life of David and Solomon and Rehoboam. Today we read about Abijah and Asa. Two men who followed their fathers' example. The judgment of the author of 1 Kings is that Abijah did not wholly walk with the Lord. He continued the pattern of sins that his father did and yet God remained faithful for the sake of His covenant with David. The author of the Chronicles is less harsh in judging Abijah. He acknowledges the way Abijah called on God in his war with Jeroboam. Still it seems clear that Abijah left a mixed legacy to his own son, Asa. Asa seems to fair better. He "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" though he did not remain true all his days. He cleansed Judah of her idolatry. He set an example by giving generously to the Temple. He cried out to God when faced with overwhelming odds in his war with Zerah the Ethiopian. Perhaps most importantly, he led a covenant renewal ceremony for all of Judah. However, towards the end of his life, his courage failed and his faith in God faltered. When the king of Israel invaded, Asa sought help from Syria rather than from God. When confronted, he refused to repent and even became cruel. God's judgment fell. He contracted a wasting disease. His reign ended in conflict. His life serves as a sobering reminder to us all.

What kind of father did you have? Was he a godly man? Did he show you how to love Jesus? Did he teach you how to pray, how to read God's Word, how to worship and serve? Did he set an example for you to follow? Did he leave a spiritual legacy? If you are a father, what kind of dad are you? Are you godly? Are you showing your children how to love Jesus? Are you teaching them how to pray, how to read God's Word, how to worship and serve? Are you setting an example for them to follow? Are you planning on leaving a spiritual legacy? If you are not a father yet but long to be one, what plans are you making right now to make sure you will be the kind of godly father your children need you to be? How are you developing your character? How are you growing your relationship with Christ? How are you preparing for that day when your first child arrives and you're given both the opportunity and the responsibility to raise them in the Lord? By the way, these are great questions for mothers as well. They are worthy of reflection for anyone who is a parent, longs to be a parent, or who serves as a spiritual parent for the children in a local church family.

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 15:25-34, 1 Kings 16, 2 Chronicles 17

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 21, 2022
Spiritual Entropy

Readings for today: 1 Kings 15:25-34, 1 Kings 16, 2 Chronicles 17

Humanity is broken. Leave us on our own and we will choose sin over and over again. We just can't seem to help ourselves. I love how Proverbs 26:11 describes it, "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." Pretty visceral image, right? We see this pattern repeated throughout Scripture. From the opening pages of Genesis all the way to Revelation. God reaches out to humanity. Raises up a man or woman after His own heart. Noah. Abraham and Sarah. Moses. Joshua. Deborah. Hannah. Samuel. David. But with each passing generation, things go from bad to worse. Spiritual entropy on display. The faithfulness of those who've gone before us is lost as our lust for power and control and self-gratification takes over. Jeroboam abandoned the ways of David. Despite the fact that God Himself raised him up and gave him the northern kingdom, Jeroboam refused to worship God in the way He deserves and demands. He sets his kingdom on disastrous course. After he dies, chaos sets in. Constant conflict. Assassinations. Betrayal. Rebellion. And throughout we read this refrain, "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord..."

What keeps us from experiencing a similar fate? Courageous faith. I love how the Bible describes King Jehoshaphat. 2 Chronicles 17:6, "His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord." What does this mean? Jehoshaphat removed all the idols and shrines that kept getting built on the hills throughout Judah. He loved God and followed His commandments. He sent out his officials to the farthest reaches of his kingdom to bring God's Word to the people. Doesn't that sound like the Great Commission from Matthew 28? Rather than wait for the people to come to him, come to the Temple, come to Jerusalem to learn about the ways of God; Jehoshaphat is so passionate about God, he sends out evangelists! Incredible! And what does God do in return? He honors Jehoshaphat. He entrusts him with wealth and riches. He gives Jehoshaphat power and authority. His kingdom experiences a season of peace as the fear of the Lord falls on everyone around them.

Is your heart courageous in the ways of the Lord? Do you seek God daily for wisdom and guidance and strength? Do you love His Word? Hunger and thirst for time with Him? Do you love to worship? To gather with God's people to bring God praise? Do you seek to serve Him in all you do? Is your work an offering? Is your home a temple? Do you share the good news of the gospel with those around you who do not know the Lord? Do you pray for revival in our nation? Do you want to see God move powerfully in our town?

Now more than ever, we need men and women of faith whose hearts are courageous in the ways of the Lord! It's literally the only answer and the only hope we have! I've seen it in action. I've seen what happens when men and women dedicate their lives to God. They plant churches. They risk pain and suffering and persecution and death for the sake of the gospel. They give up all they have for the glory of Christ. If I've learned anything from my African brothers and sisters it is this...nothing can stop a man or woman whose heart is courageous in the ways of the Lord! Thousands of new churches. Hundreds of thousands of new believers. Entire communities and regions being transformed. There's simply nothing like it on earth!

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 17-19

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 22, 2022
Miracles

Readings for today: 1 Kings 17-19

For most of my life, when I've read the story of Elijah, I tend to focus on his confrontation with King Ahab or his showdown with the prophets of Baal or his flight from Jezebel or perhaps most of all, his encounter with God on the mountain. However, in recent years, I've spent more time focusing on the widow of Zarephath. Reading her story reminds me of so many of the women I've met in places like Uganda and Ethiopia and Rwanda. Women who spend their days gathering sticks into large bundles and carrying them on their backs to market. Day in and day out they do this work. Week after week. Month after month. Year after year until their bodies give out. They trade their labor for food or for a little cash. They barely make enough to eat much less save. They never take a day off. They never take a vacation. This is the kind of woman Elijah meets when he arrives in Zarephath. She takes time out from her back-breaking labor to bring him a drink. She willingly sacrifices her last bit of flour and oil - what was going to be her final meal with her son before they died - and gives it to Elijah to eat. Despite her suffering, she never wavers in showing hospitality to this man of God. It's awe-inspiring.

As I said, I've met this widow many times before. I've spent time in her home. I've shared a meal with her. I've watched her prepare what little she has to entertain strangers from afar. I've been touched by her gracious hospitality. Despite the fact that she's worked all day. Made two or three long trips to the local watering hole. Finished her chores. Fed her children and put them to bed. She still finds time to serve. She still finds time to love. I am convinced this is why God answers her prayers. I am convinced this is why God works miracles on her behalf. She has a simple, yet profound faith. She doesn't complain. Doesn't question. Doesn't cop a bad attitude. She is faithful. She is obedient. She trusts the Lord and she is blessed.

How I wish I could be like the widow! How I wish I could live with such simple faith! She has become my teacher in so many ways. She has taught me how to pray. She has taught me how to worship. She has taught me how to sing. She has taught me how to dance. She has taught me how to serve and love and sacrifice for Jesus. When I follow her example, I find my eyes being lifted above the hills. My gaze fixes on Jesus as I realize I am in the presence of one of His very special, beloved children. The widows I've met are like "advance scouts" for the Kingdom of God. They are much further along in the journey than I am and Jesus is faithful to send them back to encourage me along the way. They are not just bit players in some other person's story...even if that person is Elijah himself! They are numbered among God's greatest saints in glory!

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 20-21

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 23, 2022
No Fear

Readings for today: 1 Kings 20-21

I find myself sitting in denominational meetings this week. I love these people. I love their heart for the gospel. I love their desire to serve God and His Kingdom. They are my friends, my tribe, my family. But I know many of them are hurting. Many of them have come out of the last two years wounded and broken and discouraged. Their churches are rife with conflict and division. They've felt each loss personally. In addition, they know the world is changing rapidly. There are forces on the move that are hostile to the church. Those forces can seem overwhelming at times. Many are wondering how much longer they can hold out. Many churches are wrestling over their future. We are living through very challenging times.

Of course, none of this is new to God. Consider the challenge Israel was facing during the reign of King Ahab. The king of Syria had gathered a coalition of thirty-two kings. His army numbered in the thousands and included many horses and chariots. He had sent word ahead that he was coming for all Ahab held dear. All his wealth. All his power. His wives and children. Nothing would be held back. Nothing left out. Ben-hadad would have it all or Ahab and Israel would be destroyed. Wiped off the face of the earth. What Ben-hadad failed to consider was God. Israel's power was never dependent on the might of her armies. Her wealth could never be measured in just silver and gold. Her influence had nothing to do with the alliances she made with the kingdoms around her. She was beloved by God. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else. He was her Protector. He was her Provider. He was her Stronghold and Shelter.

It's so easy to give into anxiety. So easy to give into fear. It's so easy to focus on the winds that swirl around us. Focus on the waves crashing over us. Take our eyes off Jesus and begin to sink under the weight of it all. But the same God who exercised His sovereignty over the hills and valleys in Israel is still at work in the world today. No matter what principalities and powers may rise. No matter what spiritual forces of evil take the field. No matter how hostile the cultural forces of our world may become, God will have the victory. All we have to do is cry out to Him. Throw ourselves on His mercy and grace. Depend on Him for all we say and do. So let's not get distracted. Let's not let fear win the day. Let's stay on mission. Focus on expanding God's Kingdom. Let's walk in confidence in the victory Christ has already won for us on the Cross!

Readings for tomorrow: 1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18-20

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 24, 2022
Singing our Faith

Readings for today: 1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18-20

Jehoshaphat is one of my favorite kings. He's not perfect. He makes mistakes along the way. He makes alliances with the wrong kind of people. And yet, his heart is for the Lord. "Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the Lord, the God of their fathers." (2 Chronicles 19:4) I cannot imagine the daily pressures a king faces. Pressures to make decisions. Pressures to provide for his people. Pressures to defend against his enemies. Pressures all around and yet Jehoshaphat made it a priority to go out among his people and bring them back to the Lord. He obeyed the Great Commission long before Jesus spoke those words. He taught his people to obey all the Lord had commanded. He believed one of the defining priorities of his kingship was the ability to make disciples. To foster an environment in his nation where his people would grow spiritually. It's truly stunning when you take a step back to think about it.

Now some might ask what purpose did it serve? Some might question if this is really the king's job? Shouldn't he be attending to affairs of state? But then we run across a story in our reading today where God's people had to put their faith into action and all the hard work Jehoshaphat had put in bore fruit. Once again, God's people had come under threat. Another enemy rose up and came against them. They are outnumbered. They are outmatched. They are outgunned. But rather than despair, Jehoshaphat turns his heart to the Lord. He calls on the Lord to be faithful to His promises. He walks by faith, trusting God to deliver him. And his people - having been taught the faith by Jehoshaphat himself and seen his example firsthand - follow him. Listen to what Jehoshaphat says and does, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever." And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed." (2 Chronicles 20:20-22)

Imagine trusting God so much that you can literally face death with a tune on your lips! Imagine believing God so much that you can walk into battle with a song in your heart! Imagine facing whatever overwhelming odds you may face in your life with joy because you know...YOU KNOW... the Lord is good and His steadfast love endures forever! It can happen, friends! I've seen it and experienced it myself! Just over a month ago, I was in eastern Ethiopia training church planters. 48 of them were being sent north into a region where a civil war has been raging. Everything has been burned to the ground in that area. There is famine and hardship and incredible suffering. There has been violence and war crimes and the ceasefire is fragile at best. The challenges these men and women face are overwhelming. All of them will face persecution. Some of them will lose their lives. But as we finished commissioning them, they left the platform singing! Singing! They believe God has gone before them. They believe God will be with them. They believe He will have the victory no matter what happens to them. It was simply incredible.

How does one get to such a place in their faith? By worshipping God. Spending time with Him regularly and frequently. Never neglecting the gathering of God's people. Seeking to serve God in all you say and do throughout the week. Keeping God's will and God's glory as the overarching priority of your life not because you are trying to earn anything or have something to prove but simply because

you love God and you want to live for Him. Will you do this perfectly? No. Neither did Jehoshaphat. But God's not asking for perfection. He's asking for your heart. Give Him your heart today.

Readings for tomorrow: 2 Kings 1-4

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 25, 2022
Miracles: What's God's Point?

Readings for today: 2 Kings 1-4

So here's a question...why does God perform miracles? What's the point of signs and wonders? Why do they seemingly happen in some places but not others? Why do they appear so random? In our reading today, both Elijah and Elisha perform miracle after miracle. Future telling. Pools of water suddenly appearing in the desert. Water purification. Incredible military victories. Vessels overflowing with oil. Resurrection. Driving out poison with flour. Multiplying bread to feed a hundred men. To the skeptical, stories like these make the Bible seem primitive and superstitious. To the doubter, stories like these can be confusing and frustrating as they wrestle with why they don't seem to happen much anymore. To the faithful, stories like these encourage belief and deeper trust in God. However, the question still remains...why does God perform miracles? Why does God break through the time/space continuum? Why does He suspend the laws of nature and the universe? Why does He intervene in certain situations but not others? Reach down and touch certain lives and not others? These are important questions that must be faced and thankfully, the Bible provides a clear answer.

First and foremost, miracles are given for the purpose of pointing God's people to faith. They are not ends in and of themselves. They are signposts. Pointing beyond themselves. They are given to direct our attention heavenward to the Lord of all creation. The Author of all life. They are stark reminders that we are not at the mercy of our circumstances. This world and all the natural laws that govern it - from gravity to thermodynamics to photosynthesis - is not all there is. There is a God who stands above and beyond such laws, who is able to set them aside for reasons He Himself only knows and understands.

Secondly, miracles are given so that God's people might always cling to hope. Even when circumstances seem their most dire. When evil seems to be on the march. Injustice and oppression winning the day. Persecution at its fiercest. Rage and violence burning white hot. Disease ravages the body. Famine and poverty threaten our well-being. Even in the darkest of times, we still have hope. Hope in a God who can and does intervene. Hope in a God who draws near the broken-hearted and crushed in spirit. Hope in a God who fights on behalf of the poor and oppressed and outcast and stranger.

Third, miracles are given to remind us how limited and finite we are as creatures. Power. Wealth. Influence. Control. We like to live with the illusion that we are the masters of our own destinies. The captain of our fates. We like to think we are in charge. We like to act like we've got everything under control. But miracles remind us who truly holds the power. Miracles remind us of our relative insignificance in the grand scheme of things. Miracles bring us face to face with the power of God and, like Job, we shut our mouths and fall on our faces before Him.

Ultimately, miracles force us to look beyond ourselves. Beyond our needs. Beyond our circumstances. Beyond our wisdom. Beyond our strength. Miracles force us to trust in God. To trust in His purposes and His design. We cannot bend God to our will. There is no magic formula to get God to do our bidding. Miracles happen on His time and in accordance with His will. Our job is to believe. To have faith. To place our lives in His hands and trust Him for the outcome.

Readings for tomorrow: None

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 27, 2022
One Person's Impact

Readings for today: 2 Kings 5-8:15

I have heard it said that the world has yet to see the power that would be unleashed through one man or woman who's sold out to God. I disagree. I think we see such power all the time. Certainly in Scripture. Take the story of Elisha for instance. He's like a one-man wrecking crew when it comes to Syria. Ben-hadad wanted to destroy Israel. Invaded time after time. He had the best generals. Mighty men of valor like Naaman. The odds were surely in his favor. But Israel had one advantage...Elisha. A man who loved God with all his heart. From Elisha's deep faith sprung wisdom and insight and even prophetic utterances. He thwarted the plans of Ben-hadad to such an extent that his counselors believed it was like Elisha was hanging out in Ben-hadad's bedroom!

Elisha posed such a great threat that Ben-hadad sent his entire army on a seek and destroy mission. Find him. Kill him. Destroy whatever city is giving him refuge. So Elisha and his servant wake up one morning only to see the Syrian army arrayed in all its might before them. It must have been an intimidating sight. The servant is immediately afraid. What will we do? How will we survive? But Elisha doesn't miss a beat. He asks God to open the eyes of his servant so that he can see what Elisha sees. Horses. Chariots. The mountains ringed with fire from the army of the Lord.

This is one of my favorite stories in all of Scripture because of the reminder that though my circumstances may seem bleak. Though I may undergo all kinds of trials and tribulations. Though I may suffer and struggle and hurt. Though the enemy wage war against me. Though the government or culture or society grow increasingly hostile to the gospel. No matter what may come, my adversaries - as numerous as they may be - are no match for the armies of the Lord! His sovereign hand continues to lead and guide and protect. His power cannot be measured. His wisdom cannot be fathomed. And if I will simply lift my eyes above the hills, I will see where my true help comes! (Psalm 121)

“Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:11) I frequently find myself in positions where I am weak. I have no power. No authority. I am not strong or swift or wise or wealthy. In those moments, I am tempted to despair. And that's when God has me right where He wants me! God does His best work when I come to the end of myself. God does His greatest work when I get out of the way. God is at His most glorious when I am weak and afraid and lonely and have nowhere else to turn. All I have to do is open my eyes. See the power He has brought to bear. Sit back and watch Him go to work. Trust Him for the victory.

Readings for tomorrow: 2 Kings 8:16-29, 2 Chronicles 21:1-22:9

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 28, 2022
Generational Sin

Readings for today: 2 Kings 8:16-29, 2 Chronicles 21:1-22:9

In yesterday's devotional, I focused on the impact a single righteous person can make in this world. Sadly, the reverse is also true. Ahab was a terrible king for all kinds of reasons. He broke just about every one of the Ten Commandments. He chose to worship Baal rather than Yahweh. He made graven images. He took the Lord's name in vain. He lied. He coveted. He murdered. He stole. He treated sin flippantly and "did more to arouse the anger of the Lord" than any of the kings who came before him. His wife Jezebel was at least his equal in unrighteousness. She partnered with him in all of his crimes. She sought the death of Elijah, Israel's greatest prophet. Together, they did more to lead Israel astray than any other king in her history.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to us when their influence exerts itself generationally over their descendants. Jehoram, king of Judah, came under their sway by marrying their daughter. As such, he chose to walk away from his own father's example of faithfulness and instead "walk in the ways of the kings of Israel." The results are predictable. The same things that happen to Israel begin to happen in Judah. War breaks out on their borders. Tribes like Edom successfully revolt and set up kingdoms of their own. Pagan shrines known as "high places" are re-established throughout the hill country. God's people begin to worship other gods. After Jehoram (or Joram) dies, his son Ahaziah follows his ungodly legacy. He even makes a strategic alliance with the house of Ahab against Syria but it ends in great tragedy. The house of Ahaziah comes to an end. Jehoram, Ahaziah's father, dies "to no one's regret."

It's a sobering reminder to us all. Generational sin is real. The sins of the fathers and mothers are often passed down to the children. Sin that goes unaddressed in our lives is often repeated by those who follow us. We exert a shaping influence for good or for evil on those around us, especially those in our own homes. How often have I seen my own weaknesses and struggles reflected in my children? How often have I seen my doubts and fears reproduced in the people I serve? How often have my own sinful tendencies come back to haunt me? Thankfully, God is faithful. As I humble myself and repent before Him, He is faithful to forgive and He is faithful to make my life a living demonstration of the gospel. Through my brokenness, His surpassing grace and power makes itself known and this too ripples out across the generations. So it comes down to this...what kind of legacy do I want to pass on? And what I am doing today to build that legacy?

Readings for tomorrow: 2 Kings 9-11, 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 29, 2022
Justice and Righteousness

Readings for today: 2 Kings 9-11, 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21

The story of Jehu is a terrifying one. Jehu is called to be God's hand of justice. He executes God's vengeance in a brutal, terrifying manner that was par for the course in the ancient near east. He assassinates two kings. He orchestrates the mass murder of their children. He systematically destroys the entire house of Ahab and Jezebel. And he eradicates the worshippers of Baal. It's a stark reminder of how seriously God takes sin. He simply will not allow evil to flourish. He will not allow injustice to stand. He will not allow humanity's godlessness to have the final word. Yes, He is patient with us. Yes, He gives us every opportunity to repent. But eventually there comes a day of reckoning. A day of judgment. A day when every wrong is set right and every injustice answered for. This is what we see on display in today's reading and it is simply a repetition of a pattern that's been in place since the Fall. Cain and Abel. The state of the world just before the Flood. The Tower of Babel. The time of the Judges. Left to her own devices, humanity inevitably descends into violence, suffering, and pain. She chooses her own ways rather than God's ways. She always wants to do what is right in her own eyes. Thankfully, God is faithful. He refuses to let us go. He refuses to cut us off forever. The rise of Joash strikes a hopeful note. God always preserves a remnant for Himself. A faithful people who follow His will and provide hope for the nation. Joash lived most of his life in faithfulness and the result is peace and prosperity and security. He restored the Temple. He cleansed the land of idolatry. He led the people back to true worship of the Living God.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. We see this dynamic played out over and over again throughout the Scriptures. I love what it says in 2 Kings 13:23, "But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now." No matter how far humanity falls. No matter how bad things may get. No matter how much violence and suffering and pain may be taking place. God is faithful. God is true. God is steadfast. Immovable. He will not abandon us. He will not forsake His people. He loves us with an everlasting love. "For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." (Psalms 30:5)

Readings for tomorrow: 2 Kings 12-13, 2 Chronicles 24

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)

June 30, 2022
Covenantal Faithfulness

Readings for today: 2 Kings 12-13, 2 Chronicles 24

God always keeps His promises. He made a promise to Noah never again to destroy the world by a flood. He made a promise to Abraham to make him the father of many nations. He made a promise to Isaac and to Jacob to bring forth from them a people He would call His very own. He made a promise to Moses to use him to deliver God's people from slavery. He made a promise to Joshua to go before him into the Promised Land. He made a promise to David to always have a descendant to sit on Israel's throne. In the ancient near east, such promises were sealed by a covenant. An agreement between two parties outlining their responsibilities. If one party breaks the covenant, the other party is not only freed from its obligations but takes revenge. Not so with God. Though His people abandon the covenant over and over again. Though they refuse to obey its conditions and live by its terms. God remains faithful. He never lets Himself off the hook.

"But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now." (2 Kings 13:23) These are stirring words especially for the Christian. We know God is so committed to keeping His promises that He sent His only Son to fulfill not only His obligations to us but our obligations to Him! Jesus took our place. He became the faithful "covenant-keeper" on our behalf. He paid the price we owed. He died the death we deserved. He endured the full fury of God's righteous wrath at human sin, turning it aside through His atoning death on the cross. This is how committed God is to us! He will never leave us or forsake us or abandon us or grow impatient with us or cut us off. His grace is eternal. His love never-ending. His mercies new every morning. His faithfulness is greater than we can ever know.

So what about us? How can we show this same faithfulness not only to God but to one another? How can we extend this same grace to each other? This same love to each other? How can we be merciful to one another as Christ was merciful towards us? There are so many divisions in our world. So many divisions in our churches. So many divisions in our families. We sin against each other. We disappoint each other. We let each other down constantly. And yet the call to covenantal faithfulness remains. To walk with each other through the dark valleys where life often takes us. To love each other even during those times when we are unlovable. To extend grace upon grace towards each other when we inevitably fail. Only God can give us the strength to do this and the good news is He promises to just that for all those who would seek Him. All you have to do is ask. Make sure to ask God to give you what you need so you can serve those you love today!

Readings for tomorrow: 2 Kings 14-15, 2 Chronicles 25-27

[Back To Table Of Contents](#)