

Take Your Positions

Covid-19 Sermon #2

3/29/2020

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Hello Friends, thank you for joining me today. Terry and I are so thankful for all of you who are watching us online. We have appreciated all your words of encouragement and support.

Today I'd like for us to take a look at what may be a mostly unfamiliar story from the Old Testament in 2 Chronicles, chapter 20. Yes, that's right, 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, the first thirty verses. Just bear with me. I think you may find it as encouraging as I have.

As the chapter begins, we find King Jehosaphat, the fourth king for the divided kingdom of Judah, waking up to the bad news that a great multitude, a vast army, was coming against the king and his kingdom. Verse three says he was "terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance."

These days I can really relate to King Jehosaphat. Every day when I wake up to the news of how a great multitude of people are now infected with Covid-19 and how health care providers are overwhelmed and how the economy is going to tank, it's terrifying! So, as I read that the king was terrified, I can relate.

Now it's important to know that the Bible tells us that King Jehosaphat was a man who "sought the Lord with all his heart" (2 Chr. 22:9) and brought spiritual reform to the nation of Judah. So, when he was faced with this terrifying news that he knew was beyond his control; that was too big of a crisis for him to handle, he didn't gather up his army and stock pile up supplies and make plans to get the elderly and children to safety. No, the first thing he did was "begged the Lord for guidance." And then he ordered everyone to begin fasting and to "seek the Lord's help." And by everyone, he meant everyone. Scripture tells us that all of the men, women and children were seeking the Lord's help together.

Friends, there is nothing wrong with making sure that our loved ones are taken care of or that we have enough supplies to see us through these troubling days, but it is much more important during these difficult times that we are begging the Lord for guidance and seeking His help. Just as King Jehosaphat and the people

of the kingdom of Judah did. This covid-19 crisis is beyond our control. Yes, we should shelter in place and take all of the safety measures we are asked to take, but ultimately, we need to make sure that we are regularly and consistently asking God to intervene and stop the spread of this virus.

I would even challenge all of you to consider fasting regularly until this crisis is over. A fast is generally considered to be not eating or limiting food for a set period of time, but it could be fasting from social media or technology or anything else that is distracting us from prayer and God's Word. If you choose to fast, use the time away from food or technology to seek God and ask Him to intervene and stop this virus. Involve your whole family in fasting in some way and seeking God's help in this crisis.

The prayer that King Jehosaphat and his people prayed when faced with their crisis shows us just how timeless God's Word is. We can even pray these same words in our current crisis. Listen to some of their prayer from verse 9. I've changed the wording a bit to fit what is going with us on right now. "They said, 'Whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, plague (coronavirus) or famine we can come to stand in Your presence...we can cry out to You to save us and You will hear us and rescue us.'" And then as the prayer continues in verse 12 "Oh God, won't You stop them (won't You stop the virus)? We are powerless against this mighty army (virus) that has been attacking us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to You for help."

Friends, whether you choose to fast or not, I encourage everyone to join in together as we pray for this virus to end; to acknowledge before God that we are powerless in stopping this virus and need His help. As we cry out to Him, we can be assured that He hears us and will answer.

The Lord's answer comes to King Jehosaphat and the people through one of the men who was praying there with them. Again, these words are very timely for us. Verse 15 reads "Listen! This is what the Lord says. 'Do not be afraid. Don't be discouraged by this mighty army (for us it would be, this mighty virus) for the battle is not yours, but God's.'" And in verse 17 the Lord's answer continues, "Take your positions, then stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem (and Lindenhurst and Lake Villa and Antioch and everywhere else this virus is attacking). Do not be afraid or discouraged."

Easy words to say, not so easy to do when we are surrounded by this virus everywhere. But we can be confident in a time of crisis and not be afraid or

discouraged if we let our great need drive us to prayer and faith in our great God. Hopefully, each one of you has “taken your positions”, in other words, unless you are providing an essential service, hopefully you are staying home and social distancing. That is the position we have been asked to take at this time. Once we have done that it is time then to “stand still and watch the Lord’s victory.”

We have an unprecedented opportunity here, friends. Often our excuse (ok, I’ll say my excuse) for not being in God’s Word and praying as much as I should has been that I’m too busy, there isn’t enough time. For many of us that excuse has been stripped away. Now, without all of the other daily distractions and obligations, most of us do have the opportunity to “stand still and watch the Lord’s victory.” We have the time and opportunity to take positions of prayer and cry out to God to end this virus; to cry out to God to protect and support the healthcare workers who are at the forefront of this battle; to ask God to grant wisdom to the world leaders who are trying to handle this great crisis; to ask for His protection over the world’s economies.

As the people headed out to battle the next morning, King Jehosaphat encouraged his people to “believe in the Lord, your God, and you will be able to stand firm.” I encourage you to do the same. Believe in the Lord, your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Seek Him and ask Him to fight this battle for us; to end this virus. Don’t be afraid or discouraged as we wait for Him to act, but stand firm, firm in your faith, expectantly waiting for this battle with covid-19 to end.

There is one other nugget of truth in verse 21 that I think can help us through this current crisis. As the people went out to battle, it says that they sang “Give thanks to the Lord, His faithful love endures forever.” Thanksgiving is always a way to take our focus off of our problems and focus instead on our great God and His grace and mercy toward us. We serve a faithful God who has seen His people through many crises in the past and will see His people through many crises in the future. We can count on it. Let us sing and dance as we give thanks and praise the faithfulness of our God.

I end with these words. Corrie Ten Boom, author of *The Hiding Place* and survivor of the German concentration camps, used to have people come up to her and say, “Corrie, my, what a great faith you have!” She would smile and reply, “No, it’s what a great God I have!” Friends, we have a great God! We can be confident in a time of crisis if we let our great need drive us to prayer and faith in our great God. Amen.

Please join me in prayer.

O Lord, our God, You alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against You. We give You thanks and praise that whenever we are faced with any calamity, such as this covid-19 virus, we can come stand in Your presence and cry out to You to save us, and You will hear and rescue us. O our God, won't You stop this virus? We are powerless against it. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to You for help.

Please give all healthcare workers strength, encouragement and protection from this virus. Provide for their every need as they serve those who have taken ill. Give wisdom to the leaders of every nation as they struggle to know what do to in the face of this crisis. Protect the economies of the nations that are fighting this pandemic so that their people don't face further hardship and struggles. Bring healing to the many men, women and children all over the world who are fighting this disease.

Almighty God, we come humbly before You, asking that You would put a miraculous STOP to this virus now in such a way that every nation would know that it is Your work and give honor and glory to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.