

WELCOME 9th June 2024 – 3rd Sunday after Pentecost '24 B

2 Kings 22:1-20 (series slide with others separately on click)

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs/GPs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & farther out into his world to you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

(This week's slide – then next 4 please make them look like headlines, then verse)

As we move into this week... Reform...A word all over the headlines this week...

"NDIS reforms introduced to slash shocking fraud" - "Gov't proposes reforms for Buy Now Pay Later providers" - "Immigration reforms to control ballooning foreign arrivals" When things aren't right, when corruption is rife, or evil baked into the system...reform is essential. But it's hard, takes courage & will be challenged.

But that's the courageous living we see in Josiah. He refused to let his HISTORY shape his STORY. He took responsibility for his circumstances & set about changing them. And when he rediscovered what was lost, the Word of God, it transformed everything. God's Word provided clarity, direction, & purpose.

No reform takes hold w/o there first being personal reform. And personal reform that matters is always inspired, shaped, & strengthened by God's Word. It has always been & can only be that way. That's what's needed now.

**"Go & pray to God for me & for this people—for all Judah!
Find out what we must do in response to what is written in this book
that has just been found!**

Josiah responded to the rediscovered word of God w/ courageous action & nationwide obedience. You may not be a king, or even think of yourself as a person of influence like Josiah...but...

When we are open to receiving God's word, we will respond to that word...
and all around us lives **WILL** be changed.

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, we who are drawn together by the good news of your open-hearted love for us, pray that we may withstand any pressures that might push us apart. Wrap your arms around us, especially when life feels out of sorts, to trust you more than our fears, and to love each person more than we love our own opinions. Anchor us in the assurance of your saving grace, and help us to give that same grace in all we do. Through Christ Jesus our Master. Amen!

Let's hear God's Word

(each of these separately)

FAITH CHAT:

1. When you feel like you are in a "no win" situation, what do you do?
How do you pray?
2. How would you describe the Bible's impact on your life?

3 PENTECOST '24 B – LIVING COURAGEOUSLY: JOSIAH

Ronald Reagan, in his 1967 inaugural address as Governor of California said, “Freedom is a fragile thing & it is never more than one generation away from extinction.” Others have said the same about the church...I think the church is guarded by a more durable strength than human freedom...but quite frankly, if you look at God’s people OT & NT...you’d have reason to worry...& the contemporary church often carries out the same follies & failures.

Even a hurried reading of the OT reveals a people whom God has blessed immeasurably, in constant flux ^{b/t} shaky faith & gross idolatry. Looking at the Kings of the **divided nation** Israel/Judah tells an even more depressing story. Saul, David & Solomon ruled over a united people, but upon Solomon’s death (& he no faith hero) the kingdom split. **ALL** 19 kings of the Nth Kingdom (Israel) were varying degrees of bad/evil/idolatrous. 12 of the 20 kings of Judah (Sth Kingdom) were also on the bad/evil/idolatrous spectrum. Of those 12, **Manasseh** was the worst. He is even said to have sacrificed one of his children to the Canaanite god **Moloch**...pretty evil guy. His son **Amon** was perhaps on the road to worse but his own advisers killed him two years into his rule. Imagine being so bad that your front bench/cabinet bumps you off.

The fish stinks from the head down It’s a familiar, if rough, way of saying that when the leadership of a family, company, organization or country are corrupt everything beneath their accountability is tainted. It was true among God’s people. The corruption & stench of idolatry had even been brought into the very Temple Solomon built in Jerusalem...the place Yahweh had chosen to dwell among his people was polluted w/ the sacrifices to foreign gods, & idols & religious practices that would turn your stomach & infuriated God. There was a knockon effect... *Manasseh also murdered many innocent people until Jerusalem was filled from one end to the other with innocent blood. This was in addition to the sin that he caused the people of Judah to commit, leading them to do evil in the Lord’s sight. – 2 Kg 21:16* The fish stinks...

Josiah saw that kind of rot in his own family...Manasseh was his grandfather. Amon his dad. No one better than Josiah knew how their vile idolatry infected his nation & he was determined to be different. **Josiah** was eight years old when he became king, & he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years...He did what was pleasing in the Lord’s sight & followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn away from doing what was right. Sounds great. How’d he do it? **During** the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David. – 2 Chron 34:3 Josiah had seen the national ruin his ancestors presided over & knew he was called to a higher calling...So he regrounds himself & his country in the sure soil of a responsive

relationship w/ God. He wants to avoid the slippery slope to unfaith. Remember last week we looked at what DA Carson said We drift toward compromise & call it tolerance...toward disobedience & call it freedom. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control & call it relaxation. We slouch toward prayerlessness & delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism. We slide toward godlessness & convince ourselves we have been set free. Josiah wants none of that...

So he regrounds himself/country in the sure soil of a responsive relationship w/ God. In doing so, he becomes the agent of a new culture in the kingdom. How do I know? He seeks to repair & restore the Temple. It’s a big job because for 2 generations it has been polluted, violated & neglected. But when he hands over the responsibility for the work, now 18 years into his reign & 10 after a personal revival/reform he says, **Entrust** this money to the men assigned to supervise the restoration of the Lord’s Temple. They can use it to pay workers to repair the Temple. They will need to hire carpenters, builders, & masons. Also have them buy the timber & the finished stone needed to repair the Temple. But don’t require the construction supervisors to keep account of the money they receive, for they are honest & trustworthy men.” Can you see any construction job where the boss says, “Nah...don’t bother w/ purchase orders & receipts I trust you”?

We know “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” “Wellness always drives out illness.” We see this in families, businesses, churches...our bodies...the system gets sick & repeats sick over & over again...makes the same mistakes & disasters & usually keeps doing the same thing expecting different results. But when you decide to live in healthy wellness/wholeness-producing ways sick goes away. A healthy workplace sheds bad workers...high expectation & high accountability produces high results. There is a tyranny of low expectations...of always making excuses, blaming someone else & acting the victim. Josiah will have none of that...& we can see the early results: *they are honest/trustworthy men*. New Sherriff in town...see deputies

Which means when the unexpected happens...**Hilkiah** the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the Lord’s Temple!”...Josiah is immediately informed...**Shaphan** also told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll.” So Shaphan read it to the king. He’s probably got his hands on what we’d call the book of Deuteronomy, Moses’ retelling of the journey of the Exodus & receiving the Law from God on Sinai. It seemingly has been “lost” somewhere in the Temple. Who genuinely believes that? *C’mon! Lost?* Pull my other leg. I’m betting one of the bad kings had it “lost.” I used to “lose” notes 1 of my primary school teachers would send home. “Lost” is a convenient way of saying “out of sight out of mind.” If I can’t see it, I can’t read it, & therefore don’t have to do what it says. Mark Twain said, “The person who **DOESN’T** read good books has no advantage over the person who **CAN’T** read them.” Same is true of God’s word. If U **DON’T** read it U have no advantage over the person who **CAN’T**.

When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair. Then he gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court secretary, & Asaiah the king's personal adviser: "He ordered them all: "Go & pray to God for me & for this people—for all Judah! Find out what we must do in response to what is written in this book that has just been found!" **How** do you lose sight of what is supposed to be foundational – fundamental for your life & the life of your family, people, & nation? However that happened to Josiah's ancestors, he was determined to not let it happen in his lifetime & dispatches his advisers to figure out what's supposed to happen next because he already has a hunch they're in deep trouble: Do you think he might have heard God loud & clear?

"Today I am giving you a choice. You may choose the blessing or the curse. You will get the blessing if you listen & obey the commands of the Lord your God I have told you today. But you will get the curse if you refuse to listen & obey the commands of the Lord your God.

*So don't stop living the way I command you today,
& don't follow other gods that you don't know." – Dt 11:26-28*

If you fully obey the LORD your God & carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you & accompany you if you obey the LORD your God...However, if you do not obey the LORD your God & do not carefully follow all his commands & decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you & overtake you: - Dt 28:1 & 15

Dt 28 is a laundry list covers every facet of human existence/daily lives & God says unfaith corrupts it all & in reply it will all fall down in ruin. Blessing or curse will pursue you throughout your life...that's either going to feel like God's companionship or like being stalked by a shark in deep water...**God's** anger must be burning furiously against us—our ancestors haven't obeyed a thing written in this book. They followed none of the instructions directed to us." Do you think he might have heard God loud & clear? He knows what he's always suspected; that his grandfather/father have led God's people to the brink of ruin & he doesn't know if there's any way out. What do you do when there are no easy answers? No win situation? Rock & hard place?

Go & pray to God for me & for this people—for all Judah! Find out what we must do in response to what is written in this book that has just been found!" Josiah took responsibility for his circumstances & set about changing them. He refused to let his HISTORY shape his STORY. He knew that rediscovering what had been lost, the Word of God, changed everything. God's Word provided clarity, direction, & purpose Josiah responded to the rediscovered word of God w/ courageous action & nationwide obedience. He did precisely what God said...there was no gap b/t God's Word & his response in obedience to it. (not lack of knowledge but of obedience)

If you read into the rest of the story of Josiah, even here...he began in repentance. He was grief-stricken by his & his people's national failure to be the people God commissioned them to be...fallen into the habits & ways of the pagans...he clears the idols & foreign religious practice out of Judah. He re-instituted the Passover like no king b/4 or since. He did all of this as the king of a people who had turned their backs on God. He feared God more than he feared the judgment of a nation. Remember...

No reform takes hold unless there is first personal reform...and personal reform that matters is always inspired, shaped, & strengthened by God's Word. It has always been & can only be that way. You may not be a king, or even think of yourself as a person of influence like Josiah...but...inspired, shaped, & strengthened by God's Word every one of us can in fact engage others in ways that point them to the hope we have w/in us.... every one of us can in fact engage others in ways that open the door to a conversation that points to Jesus...to an invitation to experience his cross-bearing love...

You heard this when we started: *Bible Study Qs/GPs are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & farther out into his world so you can share that w/ someone else.* The only way that doesn't happen is for us to avoid being shaped in obedience to God's word.

How does James say it: **Don't** just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. – Jas 1:22

When we are open to receiving God's word, we will respond to that word... and all around us lives **WILL** be changed.

TAKE IT HOME –

What will you do this week to direct your life by obedience to God's Word?

Any changes you need to make? Something you've avoided that you'll actually do?

Let's pray w/ that in mind... Gracious Father, we praise you for your unfailing love that blankets us past, present & future. We praise you in the midst of yesterday's regrets, today's troubles, & tomorrow's worries. We praise you that nothing can separate us from your love or snatch us from your sure & secure embrace. Let praise arise with faith, so that those around us will hear our voice and see your strength to be drawn into your saving love. Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen.