March 21

Happy Monday, everyone.

Today we will continue our walk through the Biblical books in order with the book of 2 Kings, another of the so-called “historical” books.

2 Kings documents the continued sad and tragic decline of the nation of Israel, and starts with the nation being divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Eventually, both would be overthrown by foreign powers and their citizens sent into as a direct result of the Jewish people’s ongoing sin and idolatry. More on that later in the week.

As we read through these historical books, it is somewhat easy to focus on the ongoing battles fought by the Jewish people against their many enemies, the pervasive sin of the Jewish people, and the persistent wickedness of most of their leaders. However, in the midst of it all, we see signs and evidence of God’s overriding mercy and grace. One such example is the miracles performed by the prophet Elisha. Here is one of the, described as “the miracle of the widow’s oil:"

“The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.” Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?” Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a small jar of olive oil.” Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.” She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left” (2 Kings 4:1-7).

Notice here that God works through the prophet Elijah, who himself starts by asking a simple question: “How can I help you?” The mere act of asking this question of this widow, who was in deep despair, had to have brought comfort, if for no other reason than someone simply cared. And then, as He always does, God handled the rest.

And so it is with us. In a world full of war and darkness and despair, God is ever present and at work. Do you know someone in need of help? Go ahead and ask the same question the prophet Elisha did over 3,000 years ago: “How can I help you?” And then let the Almighty take it from there.

IHS, Pastor Lou
March 22

Grace and peace to you this day.

As I said in an earlier writing, the Old Testament can be full of some stuff that seems downright weird to us in modern times. And yet, the Holy Spirit inspired the Biblical authors to include them for a reason, and that reason is to instruct us even today. One such episode is the floating ax head. It goes like this:

“The company of the prophets said to Elisha, “Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet.” And he said, “Go.” Then one of them said, “Won’t you please come with your servants?” “I will,” Elisha replied. And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water. “Oh no, my lord!” he cried out. “It was borrowed!” The man of God asked, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. 7 “Lift it out,” he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it” (2 Kings 6:1-7).

What do we make of this, and what does it teach us today? First, we cannot view this story through the lens of our modern eyes. If this happened to any one of us, we would simply get in our car, go to Home Depot, and buy a new ax head for a few dollars. Problem solved. That was not possible in Elijah’s day.

Ax heads were hand forged. They were expensive. They were hard to come by, and hard to replace. It would have been bad enough if your own had sunk to the bottom of the river, but this one was borrowed. Someone entrusted it into the care of these men, expecting that it would be returned sharpened and in good order, not sunk into the mud beneath the Jordan River. To not return it would be costly as well as a disgrace upon your name.

However, the Lord works through Elisha and causes an iron ax head to float so that it can be retrieved. I think the lesson here is this: God cares about the details of our lives. He cares about our day-to-day provision. All He asks is that we trust Him.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
March 23

Greetings to you, DGCC Family.

As I mentioned on Monday, the book of 2 Kings records the defeat of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 726 BC and the defeat of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in 586 BC. These are not simply some dusty old historical events that have no relevance for us today. This is God’s direct response to the evil and sin committed repeatedly by the Jewish people. He used foreign powers to overtake them and send them in to exile.

Time and again, we see the theme of wickedness on the part of the kings and the people they led. For example, following the fall of the northern kingdom, this is what the author of 2 Kings declares:

“All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the Lord their God that were not right” (2 Kings 17:7-9).

All of this may seem harsh to our modern ears, but God in His holiness simply cannot abide sin. If He did, He wouldn’t be who He is. The story I like to use to illustrate this is as follows:

When I was 10 or 11 years old, we had moved to the suburbs, and I had a friend named Jeff. Jeff’s parents were Greek immigrants, and they owned a little ranch house at the end of our block. They were living the American dream and very proud of it.

Jeff’s Dad was a bricklayer. He spoke little English and did not suffer fools lightly. Jeff’s mom was a stay-at-home mom, as most were in those days. She was a stout woman who also didn’t suffer fools lightly, especially her one and only son and his merry band of friends, yours truly included. Needless to say, Jeff’s mom kept the house pin neat, especially the kitchen.

One day, we came across a dead racoon in the street. It was a hot summer day and it had been there a while. You can imagine the rest. Jeff decided that he was going to take it home and skin it so he could have a coon skin hat like Daniel Boone. We all thought it was a great idea.

So, Jeff picks up the dead and stinking racoon, we walk over to His house, and he proceeds to place it on the kitchen counter. He takes out a kitchen knife from the drawer and is about to plunge it into the carcass when his mother comes into the kitchen from around the corner. I have no idea what it was that she was shrieking at us,
since it was in Greek, but she grabbed hold of Jeff’s ear, and threw him and Mr. Racoon out the door. We followed in very short order.

When Jeff’s dad came home, Jeff was made to scrub the entire kitchen by himself. Floor, countertops, the whole thing, to his mother’s satisfaction. Jeff’s mom simply could not abide a dead and rotting racoon anywhere near her pristine kitchen.

In a simple human way, this illustrates how God views sin. He simply cannot have it in His presence. Jeff’s penance was to wash it away. For us, that has already taken place. We are cleaner than Jeff’s mom’s kitchen because we have been washed by the blood of Jesus, shed once and for all time on the cross of Calvary.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

March 24

Grace and peace to you this day.

As we conclude our brief study of the book of 2 Kings, I’d like to finish with a look at one of the noblest characters in Israel’s history: King Josiah.

Josiah began his reign in Judah after the death of King Amon who, like many before him, “did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (21:20). But Josiah was different. He was a reformer who lived in obedience to the Lord. By the time he becomes king, the books containing the Law had been locked up in the temple for decades. The doors to the temple, built by Solomon, had been nailed shut. Pagan practices abounded and idolatry ruled the day. Josiah courageously stood up to all of that.

He ordered that the temple be opened and repaired. One of the priests found the Book of the Law and Josiah ordered that it be read throughout Israel. He destroyed all the idols and had them burned. And he ordered that the people observe the Jewish holidays, especially the Passover. This is how it is recorded:

“The king gave this order to all the people: “Celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.” Neither in the days of the judges who led Israel nor in the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah had any such Passover been observed. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the Lord in Jerusalem” (2 Kings 23:21-23).

The lesson of Josiah for us today is this: we are called to stand firm when culture turns away from the Lord. We are called to a life of humble courage, not courage of our own making, but courage that comes, as God told Joshua, because God is always with us.
And so, my prayer for you, and for our church at the corner of 66th and Fairview, is this: Let’s place our trust in the Lord. Let’s count on Him to give us the courage to stand firm. Let’s all of us be like Josiah.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

March 25

Happy Friday, everyone!

Here’s your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://youtu.be/9cKm_mYVPQE

IHS,

Pastor Lou