

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

"Josiah's Renovations"

Scripture: 2 Kings 22:1-20, 23:1-3, Hebrews 4:12

Opening Hymn: Rejoice, the Lord is King 267 (1,2,4,5)

Closing Hymn: Be Thou my vision 461 (1,2,3,5)

Children's Hymn: Praise, I will praise 420

Choruses: Cornerstone, You are my king

Rev. Steve Filyk

November 24, 2019

Christ the King Sunday

This past Sunday we had a church family meeting.

We met downstairs after worship
And talked about our facility.

We talked about how we are using it.

We talked about some needed repairs
and a greater vision to guide them.

What is clear is that this building

That was dedicated way back in 1958
When John Diefenbaker was Prime Minister,
'Hula Hoops' were a cultural craze,
And superglue was first invented,
requires ongoing renovations.

Now it was this discussion

That was in the back of my head
When I first looked at today's lesson
On Tuesday morning.

Last Sunday we were talking about repairs in our church.

And today's lesson starts with a story
About renovations in the Temple.

Now just to provide some context,
the temple undergoing renovation was built many years earlier
By King Solomon, the son of King David.

This past fall we've talked about David and his kingdom.
We heard about how it split during the reign of his grandson.

Two weeks ago we met the prophet Elijah in his contest with Ahab,
The King of the northern tribes.

Last week we switched back to the kingdom of Judah
And heard from the prophet Isaiah.

By the end of Isaiah's life the northern kingdom
Had been conquered and its peoples sent into exile by Assyria.
The kingdom of Judah had also been attacked,
and Jerusalem besieged,
but not overrun.

The latter happened during the reign of the pious,
reforming king, Hezekiah.

Manasseh succeeded Hezekiah and reigned as king in Judah
For more years than any other king.

He is remembered in the Bible as one of the worst kings.
He worshipped other gods, sacrificed his own son,
And shed much innocent blood.

Manasseh's policies were continued by his son Amon,
Who was murdered after two years in office.

Which brings us to Josiah, the son of Amon,
Who is apparently much more
like his pious great-grandfather Hezekiah
Than his wicked grandfather Manasseh.ⁱ

That he would be so different from his immediate ancestors
Has something to do with those Temple repairs.

We are told that when the renovations began in the Temple,
That the 'Book of the Law' was discovered.

Now we aren't told whether it had truly been lost,
Maybe pushed behind the other books on the bookshelf,
Or intentionally hidden from Kings
who ignored the God of Israel
And worshipped foreign gods.

But when Josiah starts a Temple redevelopment
The high priest tells Josiah's secretary
That he's discovered God's word.

The secretary read the book for himself
And then reads it to the king.
And when Josiah hears what is written,
He tears his clothes.

In our own culture a family that is mourning may choose to wear black.
This is an outward display of their feelings of sorrow.

In biblical times people tore their clothes
“to express strong emotion such as shame, anger, or mourning.”ⁱⁱ

When Josiah hears Israel’s Bible being read
He understands the people had not followed God’s will for them.
He understands that they have strayed from God’s purposes
And aroused God’s anger.

Josiah mourns.
And Josiah calls the people to repentance.

After seeking a word from one of God’s prophets
Josiah calls together the leaders of the people
And he himself reads the Bible to these leaders
And all the people in the land.

In this public gathering Josiah pledges
To “follow the Lord and keep his commands”
And all the people [do] the same.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the account that follows (that wasn’t read to you)
Josiah goes on to rid the Temple and the land
Of the idols and foreign worship practises
That had been adopted by his father and grandfather.

In the times that Israel had turned away from God
It wasn't so much that they ignored the Lord,
But refused to serve him alone.
Idols of other gods and alters to other gods
were even placed in the Temple.^{iv}

But Josiah's reign was different.

It was clear from the moment that he heard the law being read
That God's word had touched his heart.
He was transformed.

He then set out to reform "the worship life of [his] people...
Centering them in the first commandment:
to worship the Lord only and to have no other gods."^v

PAUSE

Josiah is remembered in Scripture as one who:
"did what was right in the eyes of the Lord
and followed completely the ways of his father David,
not turning aside to the right or to the left."^{vi}

At the end of chapter 23 we are told that:
Neither before nor after Josiah
was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did
—with all his heart and with all his soul
and with all his strength...".^{vii}

Quite the epitaph for the king who was the grandson of Mannaseh.
How would one following such a miserable succession of kings
prove so faithful?

Well I think it had something to do
with his rediscover of that 'Book of the law'.

As the letter to the Hebrews reminded us earlier
"the word of God is alive and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword,
it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,
joints and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and attitudes
of the heart."^{viii}

God's word has a transformative power in our lives
And in our community.
It is the prime way that God speaks to us.

As we are told in our own church's statement of belief, *Living Faith*:
"The Bible, written by human hands,
is nonetheless the word of God
as no other word ever written..."

Living Faith goes on to say:

"The Scriptures are necessary, sufficient, and reliable,
revealing Jesus Christ, the living Word."^{ix}

The Bible is God's word.

It is reliable, sufficient, and necessary.

At some level most of us believe this.

And yet this 'belief' is often betrayed by our practise.

If this is God's word, the 'lively oracles of God'

Then why do we have trouble finding a Bible in our households?

Why haven't we learned to navigate its books and its genres?

Why aren't we familiar with its pages?

Why don't we read it to our families?

Why can't we go without a coffee each morning,

But we can go without scripture for weeks?

Maybe we are afraid of what we will find in it.

Maybe we are worried that like Josiah

We will find ourselves and our nation judged.

Maybe we will.

But the Bible speak more than words of reprimand and correction.

Through the Bible God also speaks words of healing and comfort.

This past Tuesday our Alpha group was exploring this very topic:

Why and how should we read the Bible.

During the presentation, Nickey Gumbel told this story

About God has used the Bible to speak into his own life.

In his own words:

*“...my father was forty-nine when he got married.
And I was twenty-five when he died...*

*I’d become a Christian a few years earlier.
And obviously, when my father died I was devastated
because I loved him, and I missed him, and I still do.
He was an amazing man.*

*But at the time, I was really worried also about him and,
you know, what had happened to him,
and the fact that he – did he have a faith?*

*He’d always described himself as an agnostic.
He was a man of few words.*

*I didn’t really know,
and I was very disturbed by this.*

*And it was ten days later that I was praying,
and I was just saying, I was just asking God,
‘Lord, please show me something about him.’*

*And I read this verse in Romans 10,
which was the passage I was reading for that day,
Romans 10:13. It says this:
‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*

*And I felt like the Holy Spirit was saying to me:
‘Your father called on the name of the Lord, and he’s saved.’*

*At that moment, my wife Pippa came into the room
and she said, ‘I’ve been reading the book of Acts,
and I think I’ve got a verse for your father.’*

*She said, ‘It’s Acts 2:21:
“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”’*

*That verse only comes twice in the New Testament.
I’d read it in one passage; she’d read it in another.*

*Three days later, we went to a small group
and we were studying a passage: Romans 10, particularly verse 13:
‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*

*But such is my lack of faith and inability to hear God,
I was still worrying about it the following morning...*

*I was practising as a barrister – I was off to Woolwich Magistrates Court.
And I’ll never forget getting off the train at Woolwich Station,
and I was still thinking about it – it was going around my head –*

*and I looked up, and there was a great big billboard which said:
‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
Romans 10:13’.*

*I remember telling [a friend] what had happened.
He said, ‘Do you think the Lord may be trying to speak to you?’”^x*

I don't doubt that God has spoken to you in different ways.
Through the wisdom of friends or family.
In moments or prayer, or out in nature.

But of all the ways that God speaks,
God consistently uses Scripture.
God uses Scripture to correct us and discipline us
And to comfort us and heal us.

PAUSE

At the beginning of the sermon I mentioned
That we have been talking about a renovation of this facility.

I think God has big plans for renovations.

Not the renovation of our facility, but the renovation of our hearts.
These changes will begin when we rediscover God's word.
So are you ready?

May we be open to God's work.
May we be attentive to God's word. Amen.

ⁱ See Rolf Jacobson "Commentary on 2 Kings 22:1--23:1-3" www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1138

ⁱⁱ Sarah Oladokun "Why did people in the Old Testament tear their robes?"

June 8, 2017 www.christiantoday.com/article/why-did-people-in-the-old-testament-tear-their-robles/109889.htm

ⁱⁱⁱ See 2 Kings 23:3

^{iv} See 2 Kings 21

^v Rolf Jacobson "Commentary on 2 Kings 22:1--23:1-3" www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1138

^{vi} 2 Kings 22:2 NIV

^{vii} 2 Kings 23:25 NIV

^{viii} Hebrews 4:12 NIV

^{ix} *Living Faith* 5.2

^x Nicky Gumbel "Talk 6 – Why and How Do I Read the Bible?" *Alpha*