

## **Parables**

Today on Father's Day, our Gospel lesson focused on a couple of parables of Jesus. In the first, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a seed growing that a farmer had scattered. The farmer scatters seed on the ground, and plants spring up – but the farmer doesn't understand how it happens. Agriculture was done very differently in Jesus' day than the way we do it today. Now, farmers use tractors and other big pieces of equipment to turn the soil and drop the seed. But in those days, farmers carried bags of seed and scattered it on their fields by hand. Then, once the seed was scattered, they would bring in the oxen and plow it under.

Small acts of kindness shown to others go along ways. That's the gist of the story and it has a very similar point to the second parable we heard Jesus tell – the parable of the mustard seed. In that story, Jesus talks about how small the mustard seed is, and contrasts that with how big the plant becomes. I read somewhere once that from one of those little seeds, a twelve feet tall bush eventually develops. The point being, that what we consider to be small acts of love and compassion are used by God to build great things for His kingdom. Later this week we'll have a chance to make an eternal impact in the lives of children who show up here for VBS. Something as small as helping to serve a meal may be the thing that causes the proverbial light bulb to go off in a young mind, and help them see that Jesus loves them, too.

With what time we have left this morning, I want to turn to the Psalms, and look at what we're told there about doing things which we think are small – but which have the potential of making long-term impacts on people to bring them closer in relationship to Jesus Christ. If you have your Bible, or a Bible app handy, turn with me to Psalm 20.

### **Read Psalm 20.**

## **David as Teacher**

Psalm 20 is interesting. If you're reading from the NIV Bible, there's a notation just under the chapter heading which reads, "For the director of music. A psalm of David." It's not surprising that David wrote it – he wrote several of the psalms, but what I think is more interesting is who it's addressed to: "the director of music." What do you suppose that means? It means, that back when David was King of Israel, this psalm was set to music and the people sang it.

So, what we're looking at this morning is a set of song lyrics. Before battling an enemy, David found encouragement in having his people – the ancient Israelites – intercede and ask God for victory over their enemy. The psalmist writes, "May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you,"

(Ps. 20:1). See, David is having his people call out to God on his behalf here, before he leads the army into battle.

He goes on, “May He [God] send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. May He remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed,” (verses 2-4). See, David’s having the people sing this song in prayer and praise to God on his behalf. The first time the people heard this, David surely taught it to them. When you look through various psalms, you see this occur – David and Solomon functioning as teachers of Israel.

## **Praying for Leaders**

Good leaders – within the Church, but also in the wider society – should encourage their people to pray for them. As followers of Jesus, we should do that – pray for our rulers to govern with wisdom and in a way that brings God glory. Oftentimes we don’t. Instead, we complain – it’s something we all like to do – and carry on about how “if \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) were President, this wouldn’t be happening.” I do it, too.

I often look back on my childhood, and think, “they don’t make presidents like Reagan anymore.” That’s just my opinion, you may think he was a horrible president, and that’s okay. We can agree to disagree, and still show Christ’s love to each other. I think Reagan was a good president, and here’s why: he was very grandfatherly in the way he talked to the country, especially when he comforted the nation the night of the Challenger explosion.

Some people may say the same thing about George W. Bush and 9/11, or Donald Trump and Covid-19. They were constants through storms the nation went through at the time. Now, since Biden’s in office currently, I want to use him for this – when was the last time in your personal prayers that you lifted up President Biden, and asked God to bless him, and use him to bring God greater glory?

And that goes for the leaders in any country of the world. We should pray for our political leaders – even those who don’t share our faith – that they would govern in a wise way, which brings God glory. I know it’s hard to picture praying for the Kim guy who runs North Korea – but if enough people did, perhaps the Holy Spirit would work on so many hearts, that we could get Kim, and others, to the table to talk about having normal relations and working to better the lives of all the people.

We must be careful with saying prayers for our leaders. Our prayers for our presidents and other leaders can become a slippery slope. They can easily become a type of idolatry that identifies a ruler or a nation with God, and God’s purposes, and cause us to forget that God’s Church and kingdom stretches across the entire world.

As we pray for our rulers' "success," we can easily slide into depending on their political success rather than depending and relying on God's care.

### **The Lord's Anointed**

See, David has the people giving sacrifices and burnt offerings. This was something the people did as acts of worship. In a way, we do something similar when we put our tithes and gifts in the box back there. And since the people are being faithful, worshiping God, and living the way they're supposed to, they look with anticipation to what's coming.

"May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests," (verse 5). The people were anticipating victory in the upcoming battle. It's interesting that David mentions banners here. When we think of banners, what do we think of? Flags, right? They were flags. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel had their own unique banner – flag – which represented them in battle.

"Now this I know: The Lord gives victory to His anointed. He answers him from His heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of His right hand," (verse 6). David was confident that he would be successful in the coming battle because he was the Lord's anointed. Of course, if David had been guilty of sin, God might not have given him victory. However, the king believed that he was clean, and with the intercession of his people, he felt certain that he would emerge as the victor. Now, I want to point one other thing out here. David wrote the psalm and referred to himself as the Lord's anointed. David was anointed as the king of God's people.

But today, we know that another Person is the ultimate Lord's anointed – Jesus Christ. God gave the ultimate victory to us through His anointed – Jesus Christ – and we see throughout the Gospels the instances when the Father answers prayers of Jesus from heaven. For example, at Jesus' baptism, and at the Transfiguration, we see the conversation between the Father and the Son. God truly gives us the victory through the nail-pierced hands of Jesus Christ!

### **God Takes Care of Us**

David puts it in perspective for his people, and for us. He says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God," (verse 7). Chariots and horses were what they used for warfare in those days. David trusts in God's character, reputation, and His nature. David became more and more confident as he meditated on God. Nowadays, our political leaders might say they trust in tanks and nukes. But friends, we trust in Jesus Christ!

See, we have this certainty when we trust in Jesus – He takes good care of us and will see us through whatever storms we face. Notice what David says about the

worldly folks in contrast. “They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm,” (verse 8). That’s faith in action. Without Jesus, we fall, we give up. When we’re trying to do things under our own steam, this is what happens to us. But with Him, we rise up. We stand firm. He is a sure, and solid foundation.

In this psalm, David is sure of success. So, he writes out of a strong sense of confidence that God is going to take care of the situation. He describes an event that hasn’t happened yet, as having already taken place, because he knows Whose hands his future is in. David demonstrates faith here. And so can we – when we trust Jesus. He promises to never leave us or forsake us. God takes great care of us!

### **All-Powerful to Save**

David closes the psalm with “Lord, give victory to the king! Answer us when we call!” (verse 9). It’s almost the same big idea being conveyed at the beginning of the psalm – that God’s people are waiting in faith, for His answer, which is that they will have victory over their enemies. The ancient Israelites looked to God as their ultimate authority, and the One from whom victory must come. God’s people knew they could appeal to God for victory against their enemies with confidence.

The same can be said of Christians, all over the world. When we are walking with God, we can pray to Him for victory over our enemies. Let’s talk about our enemies for just a minute. What are the enemies of followers of Jesus Christ? It is not other people. People are not our enemies – they are our brothers and sisters – and some of them currently are very misguided, but we’re called to love them, nonetheless. Our real enemy is sin. The Apostle Paul writes, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (1 Cor. 15:56-57). Our enemy is a spiritual enemy – sin, the devil, death. And Jesus, at the cross and the empty tomb sets us free – He saves us – from all of it.

See church, God has already given us the victory. He washes, reconciles, and restores us to Himself. But we oftentimes don’t live like we have it. He gave us victory once for all time through the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus did the hard and heavy lifting for us, and so, in gratitude, we do all the things which He calls us to do. And when we do those things in unity together, through prayer, we become a powerful tool in the nail-pierced hands of our All-Powerful God, to remake the world as He intended it to be from the beginning.

**Prayer:** Creating God, Your reign of love makes all things new. Plant seeds of confidence and gladness in our hearts, so that, trusting Your word, we may live no longer for ourselves but for Him who died and was raised for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.