

Notes sermon St Andrews 17 Nov 2024 – 2 Chron 20:2-18

Question: Who is Jehoshaphat?

King of Judah, son of Asa Jehoshaphat was the second of the five kings who were outstanding in godliness (others: Joash, Hezekia, Josiah) 1 Ki 22, 2 Chron 17-20

And he faces a crisis of existence

Text

2 Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar.” (This was another name for En-gedi.)

3 Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the LORD for guidance. He also ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting. 4 So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the LORD’s help.

5 Jehoshaphat stood before the community of Judah and Jerusalem in front of the new courtyard at the Temple of the LORD. 6 He prayed, “O LORD, God of our ancestors, 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! 7 O our God, did you not drive out those who lived in this land when your people Israel arrived? And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? 8 Your people settled here and built this Temple to honor your name. 9 They said, ‘Whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, plague, or famine, we can come to stand in your presence before this Temple where your name is honored. We can cry out to you to save us, and you will hear us and rescue us.’

10 “And now see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing.

You would not let our ancestors invade those nations when Israel left Egypt, so they went around them and did not destroy them.

Comments

The land is facing a crisis. What to do?

Fear took hold of the King and the people

Response: prepare to ask the Lord for help

Is that our first reaction?

Jehoshaphat leads the people in prayer

He reminded God of what he had done for the people of Israel, and what they had done in response.

He holds God to account. You did this for us, so the only thing we can do is ask you for help

And the promise: You will hear us and rescue us

He then tells God what the problem is.

If only we were able to destroy them earlier – but no, you told us not to do that!

11 Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance.

And no see – they come to kick us out of the land that you promised us!

12 O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help.”

Their prayer to God is then to stop them and to help them

13 As all the men of Judah stood before the LORD with their little ones, wives, and children, 14 the Spirit of the LORD came upon one of the men standing there. His name was Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite who was a descendant of Asaph.

God's response: He speaks to the people through a prophet

Someone well known, but not known as a prophet

And the Spirit of God came upon him

15 He said, “Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the LORD's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the LORD is with you!”

God says that he will do more than stop them

They just have to go up and take their positions and stand. Not fight!

And watch what God is doing

Do not be afraid or discouraged, the Lord is with them

18 Then King Jehoshaphat bowed low with his face to the ground. And all the people of Judah and Jerusalem did the same, worshiping the LORD. 19 Then the Levites from the clans of Kohath and Korah stood to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud shout.

In response to God's word they bowed down and worshipped God

The rest of the story. God ensured that the different nations of the vast army fought each other instead. They killed themselves – to the last person. That is remarkable, as normally one of army would flee and then the other. But they fought each other until no one was left. This is not human nature, this is God's hand

So they people went out in the morning, praising God, and found the battle finished, and they could take the spoils of war

What of our own attitude?

- What do we do when we are in a crisis?
- Do we call upon the Lord, remind him of what he had done before and what he has promised?
- Is that why God is not speaking?
- Do we really take God and his promises serious?

What issues are we facing?

- As individuals?
- As a congregation of St Andrews?
- As Christians in this nation? Are we not facing a crisis of existence? For a very long time?
- What do we do then? Do we call out to God?

I think we mostly take it for granted. It has been a long and slow process. A bit like a frog in slowly heated water that is killed, but does not realise it is in danger and could hop out!

Time of prayer now

Prayer day on the 30th of November