

THANKFUL Podcast - Week 2

We continue our theme for a second week with more stories of gratitude from scripture.

Monday, November 16 - Morning

Genesis 21:1-7

The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. ² And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." ⁷ And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Comments:

Sometimes pastors have all the fun. I remember visiting a couple at the hospital. The woman was there for a scheduled c-section and didn't know she would be taken in about five minutes after I arrived. The father elected not to be in the room with his wife, so we stood together just outside. We prayed together, and it seemed like less than fifteen minutes later that the doctor came out to share the good news that his twin boys were doing well, and his wife was fine. It wasn't but a few minutes more, and we saw those boys being rolled into the nursery. What a beautiful experience to see them and to share in their parent's joy. Now, our text today tells us about the birth of Isaac. Talk about an important birth. God promised Abraham that he would make him a mighty nation. But decades passed, and his wife Sarah couldn't have even one baby. Her childbearing age came and went, and the couple couldn't understand why they had no heir. Why hadn't God done as he promised? Infertility can be so painful for women and their husbands. There is an expectation that a woman will be able to bear children. Of course, sometimes the problem is with the man, not the woman. In Sarah's case, we are told that the Lord visited Sarah. God made it possible. You see, God not only wanted them to have a child. He wanted the child to be a child of the promise. When the Lord told the couple that they would have a baby in their old age, Sarah laughed. It really was comical. But God is always good with his promises. So, imagine the day when their little boy was born! They named him laughter, given all they had been through to have a baby. But there are many different reasons why we laugh. We laugh when we hear something funny. There is the laughter of surprise or when a great amount of tension is released. There is also the laughter of gratitude and great joy. That is why Sarah is laughing: *God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.* God has given me joy. Where in your life has God given you joy? How have you seen God's mighty hand? How has God's love generated the laughter of gratitude in your life?

Let us pray:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we see what is impossible. For you all things are possible. We respond with the laughter at the magnitude of your grace. To think that you have loved us in Christ and received us as your adopted children is too much for us to take in. Thank you that you have lavished your grace upon us. For we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday, November 16 - Midday prayer

Let us pray together:

Our gracious Father, thanksgiving is a date on our calendar. We pray that you root gratitude deeply in our hearts. Give us an awareness of your glory and goodness. Help us to see that you have not treated us as our sins deserve. Instead, you have provided us with joy and a place in your kingdom. Enable us to be bearers of your grace to others, that they might share our joy and that our joy might be complete. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Monday, November 16 - Evening

Genesis 29:31-35

³¹ When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. ³² Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." ³³ She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. ³⁴ Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi. ³⁵ She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

Comments:

Over one hundred and fifty years ago, Hans Christian Andersen published a little story called the Ugly Duckling. The story began with a clutch of eggs that hatched. One of the little birds is perceived by the other birds and animals on the farm as an ugly creature. As a result, he suffers much verbal and physical abuse from them. At one point, knowing he does not fit in, he wanders away from the farm. He finds a group of wild birds migrating south and joins them. Now, this story became extremely popular because in a way all of us know what it feels like not to fit in. We can be self-critical, and the judgment of other people doesn't help. Our text this evening follows the story of Leah, the daughter of Laban. Though Leah was the oldest daughter of Laban, her younger sister Rachel got all the attention. She was the beautiful one. When Jacob ran away from home and stayed with Laban, he was immediately attracted to Rachel. She was the love of his life. Scripture tells us that Leah's eyes were weak. The word can be translated "tender." Is she cross-eyed? Is her vision poor? We don't know. Suffice it to say, that in her world she was not considered attractive. Rachel, we are told, was beautiful in form and appearance. Jacob is smitten by Rachel and will do anything to secure her as his wife. Laban knows he has leverage so he gets Jacob's commitment to work on his farm for years to earn Rachel. When the couple weds, Laban tricks Jacob. He gets Jacob drunk and sends Leah in to sleep with him instead of Rachel. As a result, Jacob is forced to work even longer, and now he has two wives. Imagine the plight of Leah. She is married to a man that does not love her or want to be married to her. She knows that she doesn't matter to Jacob. Scripture says that Leah is hated. What does she do? Leah feels that if she can bear children for Jacob, he will receive her and love her. The Lord honors Leah and provides her with children. Sadly, Jacob's heart does not change. But here is what happens. God changes Leah's heart. Over time she realizes that she cannot look to Jacob for her sense of well-being. She cannot wait until he loves and receives her. Instead, she will look to the Lord alone. As she realizes this, she names her son Judah. The name means

“praise” because she has decided, despite the rejection of her husband, she will praise the Lord. She will find her value and place in the eyes of the Lord, and he has received and loved her. This is such a powerful lesson for us. If we are looking for our value in anyone or anything else but God, we’re bound to be disappointed. The good news is that we have been loved by God. This is where our praise and gratitude come from. Can you say, “I will praise the Lord?” Let me tell you what happened to the ugly duckling. After a long time, he was swept into a group of swans, and he finds himself accepted and welcomed. One day he sees his reflection in a pond, and it all makes sense. He is a swan. I think for Leah, she not only discovered she was loved by God. She came to see herself as God made her to be.

Let’s pray:

Lord God, we are tempted to look for our value in what we achieve, who we know, and what we have. Thank you for loving us as we are in our need, in our weakness, in our brokenness. Help us to rejoice in the place we have with you and in the security of knowing that we are your beloved. We will praise you, O Lord. In your name. Amen.

Tuesday, November 17 - Morning

Genesis 32:26-30

²⁶ Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” ²⁷ The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. ²⁸ Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.” ²⁹ Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.”

Comments:

Ira Glass interviewed a man named David Dickerson on his show, This American Life. David was raised in a Christian home, and going away to college was the first time he had really considered what he believed. It wasn’t until he was 28 years old that he returned home. And, he returned with an agenda. He was angry and resentful. Why? He felt he had lost time, wasted time following God. Then later, when he felt he understood things, he felt faith was all a sham. It was then he decided to go home. To confront his father. Years of resentment over the way he had been raised meant he had time to build up his argument, gather ammunition for the showdown with his father. He was ready to fight it out with his dad. Now our story from scripture tracks with a conflict that has been brewing for a long time. Jacob stole his brother’s blessing and birthright. He’d lived under his own strength and built for himself a large family and a successful life. The problem was that he’d not only run from home. He’d been running from God. Even though God revealed himself to Jacob, Jacob had made himself an island. He was isolated from his brother and his family, and even the family of Rachel and Leah, the women he married. But we can’t run from God. One night while Jacob was alone, God confronted him. God wrestled with Jacob. How many of us have done that metaphorically? We have stood against God and life in our own way. We have, in a sense, dared God to come forward, to engage with us. Well, God did engage with Jacob. He wrestled with Jacob through the night. Of course, God could win whenever he wished. No one can wrestle with God and win. But God knew that Jacob needed to have it out with him. Sometimes we need

to have it out with God. We need to say what we need to say and throw the beast on the table. Jacob couldn't win but he also wouldn't let go. If he couldn't win, at least he could get God to bless him. He was willing to wrestle God all night if that's what it took. But God asked Jacob, "What is your name?" The truth is that Jacob's name was more than just a name. It was his true identity. His name meant liar, supplanter, deceiver. To speak his own name to the Lord meant telling the truth about himself. This is what the Lord wanted Jacob to come to terms with, his condition and what he had become. Jacob spoke his name to God, but God did not leave things there. He gave Jacob a new name: Israel. That name means two things, "prince of God" and "he wrestles with God". Yes, wrestling with God will redefine you and reveal to you the identity God gives to you. It will also strip away the identity you have given yourself. That's why this scene ends in gratitude. Jacob says, "I saw God face to face and yet I lived." It is in wrestling with who we are and what we have become, that we just might see God. This is how God changes us. Now, let me tell you about David and his confrontation with his father. He came with his guns loaded, arguments to prove his father wrong in his faith. He came prepared to win, but his father did the unexpected. He told his son how proud he was of all he had accomplished, that he was proud to be his father. David came ready for a fight and all he found was love. I think David had the chance to see God's face. I hope you have wrestled with God as well and that you know you are loved.

Let's pray:

Our Lord God Almighty, only you know my true identity. I only know the names other people have given me or the name I have tried to give myself. Thank you for wrestling with me, so that I might know you and your love for me. Thank you for giving me a new name, built not on my achievement but based on your grace. Enable me to give thanks to you for your love. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, November 17 - Midday prayer

Let's unite our hearts in prayer:

Abba, Father, as human beings we feel so estranged from you that we have difficulty believing the gospel. We try each day to achieve a place and a name that you have freely given us in Jesus. We feel we have something to prove, something to earn. The truth is we are exhausted by it all. We find ourselves pretending rather than resting in your grace. Thank you for showing us Jesus and the cross, that we might come to enjoy all you have given to us. For we pray in your name. Amen.

Tuesday, November 17 - Evening

Exodus 15:1

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and rider he has hurled into the sea."

Comments:

Pastor Rod Rosenblatt tells the story of a man that fell overboard during his Caribbean cruise. It wasn't easy, but the ship managed to turn around to rescue the man. Clearly, the man could not swim well enough to save himself. A rescue ring life preserver was thrown overboard to him, attached to a rope to save him. When the man was safely on board, he remarked to the watching crowd: "Did you see the way I grabbed that life ring? How well I

held on and saved myself? There has to be some award for that. I must be some kind of hero." Ok. We should laugh. Here was the man that managed to endanger his life by going overboard, and the ship had to turn around and rescue him. But he has made himself the hero because he held the life preserver. It's a silly story. Now our text today comes from the celebration after the army of Pharaoh lost at the dividing of the sea. It is a grace story because the Israelites can do nothing to save themselves. After Pharaoh let Israel go into the wilderness, he had second thoughts. He didn't want to lose his slave workforce. He didn't like the prospect of losing at all. So he sent his army to pursue Israel. The army caught up to Israel and had them boxed in. Israel had their backs to the sea and Pharaoh's army was ready to pounce. Israel had no weapons, no means of escape, and no hope...that is, apart from God's intervention. God fights for his people. As the song says, God hurled the horses of Pharaoh and his warriors into the sea. Here is God's decisive action to save his people. When the time comes for celebration, they can take no credit for their victory. It is all of God. And, only God could pull this off. What looked like a dead end became an escape for Israel. This is the way grace works. God fights our battle for us. We could never restore ourselves, remove the cursed spot created by our sin. But Jesus intervened by dying in our place and, in turn, giving us his place. Talk about rescue story. This is why we are told there is no room for boasting in ourselves. We can only boast in God. That is the subject of the song in the wilderness when the people of Israel sing and Mariam dances before the Lord. Now, this is the story we are living in Christ. So, why are we not more thankful? Do we think we had something to do with it? Maybe we feel like we are the heroes for holding onto the life preserver. Just like for Israel, hopefully at this point we come to see that we are loved and received by God as his own. We see that his intervention on our behalf reveals his characteristic love and our status before him. Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted.

Let us pray:

Almighty and sovereign God, we think everything depends on us. We have to take care of ourselves because no one else will do that. But, in the gospel, you show us this is not true. We can't save ourselves. Only you can do that. Teach me how to celebrate your victories and to live in the joy of your care. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday, November 18 - Morning

Numbers 6:22-27

²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴ "The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."²⁷ "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

Comments:

If you're married or dating someone, you probably remember who said, "I love you" first. It's a big moment, and the one who says it first is putting a lot on the line. What will be the reply? When will the love come back to you? I remember the funny scene in Star Wars when Princess Leia shouts out to Han Solo just before he is put into a deep freeze, "I love you!" His reply? "I know." Classic Harrison Ford. The priestly blessing that God told Aaron to pronounce upon the people was his way of saying, "I love you," and he said it first. The blessing is all about God's good intention toward his people. Think of it: God says that Aaron

should say, "May the Lord bless you and keep you." In other words, he is saying, "Tell the people that I do bless them, and that I will keep them. Tell them that my face shines upon them, and my grace for them overflows. Tell them that I am facing toward them. Tell them that I am giving them peace." How beautiful! It's a love letter from God himself. He initiated it. His promise is to do good for his people, to protect them. Twice he says his face will shine upon them. This makes me think of the sun shining on the earth, giving light and life. It also means he gives attention to his people. He does not turn away, even though they may disappoint him. His gaze is fixed and determined. God says that he is rich in grace toward his people. He does not hide from their sins, but he covers over them and loves anyway. Finally, he says that he gives them his peace. What could be more valuable than the peace that God gives? It means an end to striving, an end to fear, an end to making one's own way in the world. Now think back to that first, "I love you" that you received from your spouse. How did it make you feel? You probably felt noticed. Maybe that "I love you" was like a blanket covering over the rough edges of your relationship or covering your insecurities or your fears for the future. They might still be there, but they mattered less. Maybe you felt calm, suddenly more confident and secure. If you heard those three little words a little later than you hoped, it was probably a relief when they finally came. God has spoken out his love for you, and he wasn't late in saying it. He loves you so much. It's something to be thankful for, yes, but it's also something we can return, loving him back.

Let's Pray:

Dear Lord, we thank you for loving us. It can be a hard love to accept, a hard love to believe. But you have spoken over us blessing, protection, and peace. You have turned your face toward us, drawing us into relationship with you. We don't deserve this love. Help us to accept it. Help us to accept peace with you and learn to love you. Amen.

Wednesday, November 18 - Midday prayer

Dear Lord, today we consider the blessings you have spoken over us. You have called us your beloved children. You have said we are holy, and that we will do good works in your name. You have promised to heal us and to set us free from the sin in our lives. You will complete the work you have begun in us. Lord, we live in these truths today, and we look forward to the day you will bring them to fulfillment. And for this we thank you. Amen.

Wednesday, November 18 - Evening

Deuteronomy 33:27-29

²⁷ The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, 'Destroy them!' ²⁸ So Israel will live in safety; Jacob will dwell secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew. ²⁹ Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights."

Comments:

These are last recorded words of Moses. They come at the end of a series of blessings he pronounced on each of the twelve tribes of Israel before climbing Mount Nebo and gazing upon the promised land. He died there on that mountain as God had said he would, never entering the land. Moses had been the singular leader of the Israelites during their exodus

from Egypt and their 40-year wandering in the Sinai wilderness. In fact, there may have never been another leader like Moses, who guided an entire nation singlehandedly. He had very little support from the other leaders, and several times he escaped insurrection only by God's miraculous signs on his behalf. The people came to understand that Moses was a prophet who had a special relationship with the Lord. He spent days, sometimes weeks, in God's presence, and he spoke on God's behalf to the people. Everything of consequence that he told the people proved to be true. So, it is with that context the people had to consider his final words, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." This is a statement of God's amazing provision and fatherlike care for his people. They come as a contrast with most of what Moses told the people, which were laws and instructions they had to follow. Here he describes the Lord carrying Israel in his arms as a parent would carry an infant. His provision and protection for them was that strong. And twice he says that God's care for them will endure because God himself is eternal. I particularly like the declaration that God will uphold them with his "everlasting arms." Perhaps you know the hymn inspired by this description. The rest of Moses's blessing contains five future tense statements about what God will do: he will drive out their enemies; he will make them dwell in safety; he will give them a land of abundance; their enemies will cower before them; and they will march upon the high places of the land in triumph. It might seem peculiar that God's blessing to his people was partly in the present and partly in the future. But I believe this had the effect of aiding the people's faith. They had seen the Lord's faithfulness during their journey in the desert. When Moses said the Lord was their refuge, they must have thought of the manna they received each morning and the water that poured out of the rock. When he said "Blessed are you Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord?", it must have brought to mind their miraculous deliverance from the Egyptians. They had lived these blessings already. Remembering them helped them to believe and to be thankful for what he promised to do next. When we consider the blessings God has given us, we see a similar combination of those we experience today and those promised for the future. For example, the Holy Spirit guides and comforts us now, and he gives us confidence that we will receive the new life promised by Jesus. God's blessings are extravagant and rich, so rich that they cannot be experienced in one moment. We cannot pull the future forward, but thankfully he has given us promises that show his love for us.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, we are so blessed to know you. Your life gives us hope, and your Spirit sustains us. We are richly blessed today. But just as Moses promised an abundant life for your people, we know that much more awaits us. Help us to count your promises as true, to see your good intentions for us, and to be thankful for the life you are giving us. Amen.

Thursday, November 19 - Morning

Numbers 24:2-7

² When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him ³ and he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, ⁴ the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: ⁵ "How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel!" ⁶ "Like valleys they spread out, like

gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters. ⁷ Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water.

Comments:

In one of actor Steve Martin's movies entitled, Leap of Faith, he plays a con artist named Jonas Nightengale who has become a revival evangelist. Jonas is traveling the country with his team of fellow con artists when their truck breaks down in the town of Rustwater, Kansas. While having to wait for days, Jonas decides to hold revival meetings so that he can make some money. The problem is, the local sheriff does a little research and discovers Jonas for who he is. The sheriff does his best to inform the people of Rustwater and protect them from Jonas, but the performance of the con artist is so convincing, the people are taken in. Now, our text today is about a prophet named Balaam, a man hired by the king of Moab to pronounce a curse on Israel during Israel's journey in the wilderness. In those days, prophets and priests were recognized for their spiritual insight and power, and often they hired themselves out. That was the king of Moab's plan. He wanted to pay a prophet to predict the destruction of Israel, creating a fulfilling prophecy. But, here's the thing. When Balaam set off on his journey to visit with the king of Moab, the Lord sent an angel to prevent him. Balaam couldn't see the angel blocking his way at first, but his donkey could. His donkey refused to proceed. Balaam's response was to beat the donkey into submission. Then God did the most unusual thing. The Lord gave the donkey the ability to speak. It is then that Balaam understood that his donkey saved his life. As a result, Balaam came to see that he can only prophesy the words the Lord shares with him. He must speak the truth. What ends up happening is that Balaam goes to Moab, and then pronounces a blessing instead of a curse. Of course, the king that hired him is none too happy. Now, the lesson from Balaam's life is pretty clear. God is sovereign, and no one can frustrate God's plan. There is no power that can stand against the Lord. As you read Balaam's word, what you hear are blessings for Israel and the future God has promised for his people. What good news this is for us. No one can alter God's plan. When God redeems, his redeemed are safe in his care. Now, let me tell you what happened to Jonas Nightengale, the con artist. One evening a man came to his revival meeting and experienced a real healing. God intervened. It was clear, and even the fraud knew it. He'd played games with the idea that there was a God, and God existed after all. He didn't know what to do with that, so Jonas walked away from his con for good. As far as Balaam is concerned, he stood on the wrong side when he later joined forces in battle against Israel. He died in fighting what he should have known was a lost cause.

Let us pray:

Lord God Almighty, thank you for your sovereign care that gives us security in the world, for your truth that reminds us you are at work bringing about your purposes, and for your grace that brought about our rescue. Provide us with your joy today, knowing that we are yours. For we pray in your holy name. Amen.

Thursday, November 19 - Midday prayer

Let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our

debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Thursday, November 19 - Evening

Joshua 23:14

And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.

Comments:

I read the story of a woman that received her parent's furniture. They had sold their home and downsized as they were getting older. Among the items passed on to her was her parents' bed, made of a beautiful wood. She'd always loved the bed, and so she decided to use it to replace her own bed. After it was in position, she noticed some words had been etched into the wood. But she could not make sense of what was there. A phone call to her mom would clear things up. Her mom told her the bed had been in their family for four generations, and her grandparents had etched stories of major family events into the wood, the various ways God had worked in their family through the years. This woman realized she had not only inherited her parents' bed. Here was the story of her family. She arranged a time when her mother could share with her the details of each etching. Now, as we reach the end of the book of Joshua, we learn that Joshua makes a rather long address before the people before he dies. His goal is to tell the people their story and how they have come into the land of promise. Why does he that? He doesn't want them to forget where they came from and how God has saved them. He also wants them to renew their commitment to the Lord. This statement from today is at the center of that message Joshua delivered. He tells the people to look across their history and see if it is not true: God has fulfilled every promise he made to them. He has done everything he said he would. He has been faithful in every way. Now, for Joshua, this is a beautiful story because only he and Caleb survived from the first generation that went into the wilderness. In other words, he has seen it all. He saw the slavery in Egypt as a young man. He was an apprentice to Moses in the wilderness. And then, unlike Moses who was not allowed to enter into the land, Joshua went in and assisted in the period of conquest. He helped to secure the land for each of the tribes. Though he was the oldest man in the nation, God made all of this possible. He is not only telling them their story. He has personally seen and experienced the faithfulness of God. His account is an eyewitness account. And, Joshua says that God did it all. God freed them from their slavery. God defeated the armies of Pharaoh. God brought them into the land and gave it to them. There is a day when we see this. How can we not give thanks? How can we not follow him and trust him? That young woman learned from her mother how her grandfather was miraculously spared during the great war, how the Lord preserved her grandmother during particularly difficult pregnancy and birthing. She learned about God's goodness shown to her family. That headboard became a treasured record of God's grace.

Let us pray:

Faithful Father, it is true. You have done everything you have promised. You have done all things well. As I look across my life, I see your goodness and your love. Help me to remember and rejoice. For I pray in the name of Jesus, amen.

Friday, November 20 - Morning

Judges 5:1-5

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day: ² "That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the Lord! ³ "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing; I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel. ⁴ "Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. ⁵ The mountains quaked before the Lord, even Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel.

Comments:

Most people think that President Harry Truman said it first: *just think of what can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit*. Yes, there is a great temptation to desire the spotlight. That can be especially true when you have done something significant, when there is something to celebrate. We don't like the credit going to someone else. Now our text today comes from the book of Judges. The words are taken from a victory song sung by Deborah and Barak. Here's the story behind the song. God called Deborah to be a judge over Israel. The term, judge, referred not to a judge hearing legal cases. It was used to describe a leader appointed by God to rescue the people from their time of distress. Deborah is the only female judge, and yes, she did actually hear cases brought to her for judgment. In those days, the Canaanites, under the leadership of King Jabin, oppressed Israel. He had a modern army serving under his general named Sisera. The situation for Israel looked impossible. Their defeat seemed all but certain. Israel was ill-equipped, but the Canaanites had iron chariots, the battle tanks of their day. Yet, God told Deborah to deliver his word to the leader of Israel's forces. His name was Barak. Yes, the name means "lightning", but Barak refused to go into battle unless Deborah, the Lord's judge, went along with him. He was a leader, but in truth more a coward. Deborah told Barak that because of his reticence the glory of victory would not go to him. He would command the army but the glory would go to a woman. Now, we might assume the woman would be Deborah herself, but there was a surprising turn of events. God caused the River Kishon to overflow its banks, and God swept away the iron chariots, leaving the Canaanites vulnerable. They were forced to flee on foot and were defeated by Israel. The Canaanite General Sisera also fled and hid in a tent. There a woman named Jael caught Sisera while he was sleeping and drove a stake through his temple and killed him. Yes, it's a gruesome scene for sure. There was so much that transpired. Israel's army routed the Canaanites; shouldn't they get the credit for the victory? Barak led the army into battle. Maybe he should get the glory. Deborah gave confidence to Barak by going along with him. Should she get the glory? What about the woman Jael, the one that killed Sisera? Shouldn't she get the glory for the victory? If you answered "none of the above," you answered correctly. The song Deborah and Barak sing is about the advance of God. The thread that runs through the song is about the Lord. It really does matter who gets the credit because the glory belongs alone to God.

Let us pray:

Lord God, Faithful Father, living Lord, yours is the power and the glory. We know that you are the author of all of our victories. We like to be cast as the hero of our story, but you alone make life possible. You are the one that saves us, the one that is the giver of every good gift. Let this season be one when we remember your goodness and glorify your name. Amen.

Friday, November 20 - Midday prayer

Let's pray:

Lord God, we want to give thanks to you, to make known all that you have done. We remember your covenant of faithfulness to your people, how every promise of yours is fulfilled. We live in a day when trust has been eroded, and truth is hard to find. We thank you that you are the God that never lies. We seek you and remember that you are light, and there is no darkness in you. Give us peace, knowing that you are sovereign in history, and joy, knowing that you will bring all things to fulfillment in Christ. For we pray in your name. Amen.

Friday, November 20 - Evening

1 Samuel 2:1-2

Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. ² "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

Comments:

Years ago, when we were just getting started with our family, a relative of mine sent us a surprising gift. It was not anything I had asked for, nor had I let anyone know our needs at the time. That gift opened the door for Sandy and me to buy our first place to live. It took me a while to take in the generosity of the gift because it had come to us as such a shock. I read this same surprise in the song of Hannah. She felt like a nobody, and in her world, she really was. She had no wealth or status of her own, and her husband had two wives. His other wife could bear children, and Hannah was infertile. Without children, how important could she be? But she knew the Lord, and her need became a blessing because it drew her closer to him. She became a woman of prayer. As she cried out to the Lord, she pleaded for the baby she had not been able to bear. She did more than that. She promised the Lord that if he granted her prayer, she would dedicate that child to the Lord. He would serve the Lord all his life. Here was Hannah's surprise. God heard her prayer. She might be a nobody in her world, but to the Lord she was precious. Her song of praise tells of how God has seen the one that was overlooked and lifted up the person that was of no account. God gave Hannah a baby boy, and she named him Samuel, which means the Lord hears. Indeed, the Lord does. The Lord hears the high-born and the low-born, the wealthy and the rich. Our God is no respecter of persons. Hannah's song of praise is a celebration of God's gift to her and a description of the magnitude and expanse of God's grace. And, yes, Hannah did the unthinkable. Who could give up a child so treasured? But, when he was young boy, weaned and all, Hannah took him to the sanctuary of the Lord. Samuel lived there and served the Lord all his life. He became a judge of Israel and the prophet that stood before Israel's kings to declare the word of the Lord. What's beautiful is when Mary was told by the angel that the Lord had selected her to give birth to the messiah, Mary sang this song of Hannah, and also added a few words of her own. The song was the announcement that the Lord had sent his son to be born among the poor and lowly.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, you surprise us each day with another day to live, to enjoy your gifts and all that you provide. Most days we fail to see the miracle we are living in. In the scope of the creation, we are but tiny specks. But you have noticed us. You have made us a little lower

than the angels and crowned us with splendor. How majestic is your name in all the earth!
Amen.

Saturday, November 21 - Morning prayer

Let us pray:

Lord God, we are like the child at the seashore, amazed by the sand, the splashing of the waves and the sight of seagulls. We are satisfied by finding the next shell. The whole time the great ocean of who you are lies before us. Fill us, I pray, with wonder as we consider you and your glory. Use your creation to point us to your power, your love and your wisdom. Help me be alert today to the world you have placed around me and to all the amazing people you have made. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, November 21 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, I am amazed at how many people fill our world. Yes, there is so much experience we share because we are human and made in your image. But there are so many different ideas and perspectives. Help me not to feel threatened by our many differences, but to learn to love people the way you do. Thank you that in Jesus your grace is sufficient for us all. Continue to show me that Jesus came to bring together a new family based, not on heritage or language or culture, but based on your loving-kindness and goodness. Thank you that you have accomplished this in Jesus. For I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, November 21 - Evening prayer

Let us pray:

Loving Lord, I come this evening praying with gratitude for the people you have placed in my life. You have extended the gifts of your love and faithfulness through my parents and family members. I thank you for each of them by name... You have brought friends into my life, people that support, encourage, and share life with me. You provide me with wisdom and direction through others that care about me and who are available to me. Show me the ways you call me to extend your grace to others. Enable me, by your Holy Spirit, to be a faithful friend and a caring brother/sister in Christ. For I pray in the name of my older brother Jesus. Amen.

SUNDAY, November 22 – Worship

When you are ready to return for worship, we are taking RSVPs on a first come, first served basis. RSVP here: <https://granadachurch.com/rsvp/>

9am - Heritage Service

11am – Contemporary

1pm - Spanish Worship

Our services may also be accessed at one of these platforms:

granada.online.church

[Facebook Live](#)

[YouTube](#)