

Sunday, October 16, 2016
Pastor Don Denyes

Introduction to 2 Kings 6:24-7:20

The Apostle Paul spoke highly of the Old Testament. In fact, in one of his letters to Christians in the first century he said, “whatever was written in former days [meaning the Old Testament] was written for our instruction, that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). So we must understand every time we open the Old Testament that we are not simply reading stories, but we are reading stories about how God interacts with His people both then and now.

This passage in 2 Kings instructs us about how God desires His people to experience blessing, despite their sin, and through the means of the faithful few who tell others about the good news they have come to understand. While this passage is not fundamentally about you and I, it is nevertheless helpful to teach us how to live godly lives here in the present.

Context

Prior to this story, near the end of chapter 6, the LORD had spoken to the prophet Elisha and told him the secret strategy of their enemy. Word gets back and the Syrian king thinks Israel is cheating! So he tries to kidnap Elisha (as if Elisha somehow instinctively knew). In the end, the LORD worked greatly through Elisha to spare the people of Israel total destruction at the hand of the Syrians. But the Syrians were not destroyed...

Structure

- I. The Plight of Israel (6:24-31)
- II. The Prophecy of Elisha (6:32-7:2)
- III. The Lepers Discover and Announce the LORD's Deliverance (7:3-15)
- IV. The People Are Saved (7:16-20)

Read and Reflect (*Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.*)

Read 2 Kings 6:24-7:20

- Day of the People's Desperation (6:24)
- Day of the LORD's Intervention (7:5)
- Day of the Church's Obligation (7:9)

Why is it not good to be silent?

- Divine Intentionality
- Moral Responsibility
- Future Accountability

Discuss

1. The people of Israel found themselves in a desperate situation when their enemies laid siege to their city. How would you describe their actions in verses 28-33? How are the actions of someone who is spiritually famished apart from Christ similar to those of the people described in this passage?
2. The King of Israel blamed the LORD for the trouble he faced. After all, prior to this, the LORD had miraculously revealed the plans of the enemy so that Israel could avoid disaster. Do you ever find yourself taking God's mercy for granted? Have you or someone you've known ever gone so far as to blame Him for trouble that you have brought upon yourself? Why does that happen?
3. Pastor Don compared the lepers who discovered the good news that the enemy had left to our situation as Christians. How is our situation similar to theirs? How might their discovery of the food in the enemy camp compare to a Christian's relationship with Jesus?
4. When the lepers realized how great the feast they had come across was, they decided they needed to tell the people of the city. Why is good news worth sharing? What might inhibit someone from sharing good news?
5. The LORD wants those who follow Him to share eagerly about the good news they have found in Jesus. Who are some people in your regular sphere of influence (people at work/school, neighbors, friends, even casual acquaintances), with whom you could share the good news about Jesus? If you're ok with it, let's pray for them (and for you) together by name.

Go Deeper (*This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting*)

Gospel Connections: As Pastor Don pointed out, the gospel is all about experiencing the love of God. Similar to, but even greater than, the way the starving lepers tasted the good food of the Aramaean army, as Christians our famished souls can taste the goodness of the grace of the Lord Jesus. He is the Bread of Life and the Living Water. God provided Him in the same way as well, miraculously and without cost. He wants all people to know His goodness, and so we are charged with bringing this good news to all people everywhere so that they, too, might enjoy Him forever!

Whole Bible Connections: The LORD is abundantly merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Time and time again in the history of Israel, He would deliver His people out of the hands of their enemies. And yet, there would be a time when that particular grace would end. One day the Assyrians laid siege to the people of Israel (Northern Kingdom) and they destroyed them, and hauled many of them off into exile. Yet the LORD would still redeem them and allow some to return to the land. One of their descendants, a woman who had gone to get water, would receive even greater news than the starving people in Elisha's time did: the Messiah, Jesus, had come. The LORD was ultimately faithful to His promise and would bring salvation—not from any earthly conqueror—but from Satan, sin, death, and the wrath of God.

Theological Connections: The presence of evil and suffering is a great mystery to theologians. Often skeptics will frame the issue in terms of “meaningless suffering.” However, the “meaninglessness” of suffering is often only seen on our end. Because we cannot see the purpose in it, however, does not mean that He doesn’t have any. Joseph understood this when he said, “what you meant for evil, God meant for good.” Likewise, though we, or the people around us, may experience great suffering from time to time, we ought not forget that in the midst of deepest suffering, God’s grace can most clearly be seen.