

Friday, June 22, 2018

Devastation

1 Samuel 5-6

Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon... The LORD'S hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors. 1 Samuel 5:2, 6

The ark of God has been captured by the Philistines. The elders of Israel had called for it to be brought from Shiloh and the sons of Eli came along. The ark of God was captured and the sons of Eli were killed. When Eli was told, he died as well and the declaration was made that the glory had departed from Israel. But God is not handled by human hands like other gods are. God is sovereign, even over the movement of the ark. He is not brought to Ashod by chance. He is not placed in the temple of Dagon by chance. He reveals that He will not be mocked. God is not a god to be used as a magic genie, as are all other gods. God is the majestic ruler over all there is. He is to be adored above all others. Mocking God brings consequences—in this case, tumors and devastation. God is not to be mocked, yet so many do. They discount who He is and His ultimate authority. They cling to worthless things and then blame God when those worthless things tumble and fall and break before Him in the same way the statue of Dagon did. I must be very careful to worship the LORD alone and not mock Him by setting Him amidst all the other mundane pursuits of my life. He must be given preeminence.

Dear LORD, forgive me for the times that I have mocked You and thought that I could control You. Help me always to be worshiping You alone. Amen.

Saturday, June 23, 2018

Rejecting

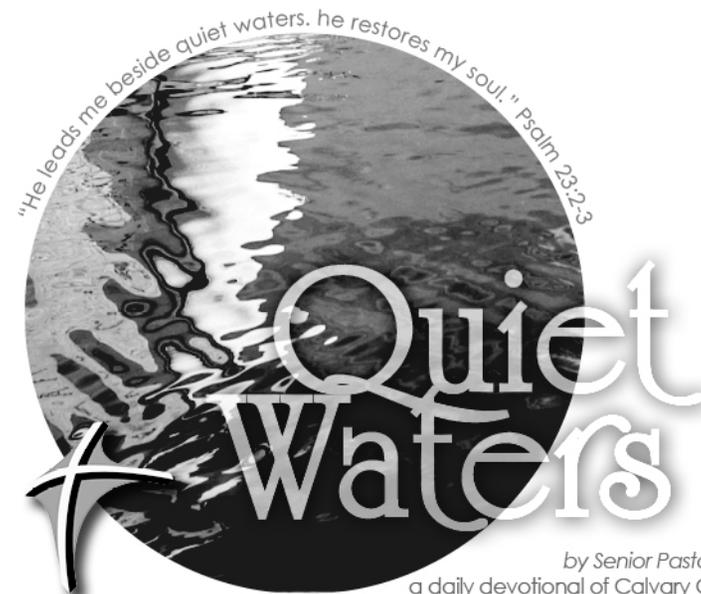
1 Samuel 7-8

And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do." 1 Samuel 8:7-9

Every time I read this passage, I wonder about the heart of God. I do not handle rejection well and I have never experienced rejection at this level—absolute and continual rejection. Notice that God does not say that they *have* rejected, but that they *are* rejecting and, of course, the implication is that it will continue. From the time that God delivered them from Egypt, they have been looking for something else to give the glory to for their deliverance, continually rejecting God as the deliverer and King. Just a few years before this request, God had again come to their defense when they turned their hearts back to Him. He kept the Philistines from coming into their land. And yet, they wanted a king like the other nations had—a weak man who would take whatever he wanted from them instead of the all-powerful God who was constantly bestowing grace. Does that really seem like a good trade? I must be very careful not to reject my King. I must look intentionally for ways to submit to His authority in my life.

My King, I bow before You and I worship You. I thank You for all the times You defended me for Your glory, even as I was rejecting You. I praise You because You are an amazing and loving King. Amen.

June 18 - 23, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, June 18, 2018

Commitment

Ruth 1-2

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." Ruth 1:16-17

In the midst of the time of the Judges, as the Israelites were doing what they thought was right in their own eyes, God tells the account of Ruth. These verses contain some of the most memorable words of all Scripture. While they are spoken from a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law, they still inspire commitment. Ruth is not choosing the easy or safe way. She is choosing to leave everything that would ensure safety and security, and committing herself to sacrifice for another. She is leaving her family, her home, and her religion. She is committing herself to another home, another family, and another God. Her commitment is amazing—an inspiration. She pleads for Naomi to accept her commitment; she commits to her for life; she puts all of her own interests aside; and she calls God as a witness to the promise. Am I ready for this type of commitment in my life? Have I come to a place in my life where I am ready to place the needs of others above my own, as God leads me? I pray that I am ready to be used by Him for His glory.

Dear Father, that is my prayer. I long to have a total commitment to You and all that You are doing. Shape me and break my selfish heart that focuses on my needs and misses or discounts the needs of others. Amen.

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Kindness

Ruth 3-4

"The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor." Ruth 3:10

Ruth's selflessness continues as she learns the customs of a new culture. She is requesting marriage from Boaz, who apparently does not see himself as the best choice for her. He sees her request as a kindness. In Boaz, I sense a man with a humble spirit and a pure heart. He prays a blessing over Ruth. I don't think there is any way that he could have known how God would choose to fulfill this prayer. Ruth will become the great-grandmother of David, "a man after God's own heart." The kindness and selflessness of Ruth reveal to me that she was a woman after God's own heart. It causes me to wonder about Obed and how he led his life, being raised by a mom who was kind and selfless and a dad who was generous and humble. What impact did that have on David's life? The Bible does not tell us, but he was a boy who loved to write and sing psalms to his LORD. Truly, the LORD blessed Ruth—and all of us—through her commitment and her sacrifice.

Dear LORD, help me to let kindness overtake my heart, first, and then my actions. Please help me to be humble and generous. Help me impact each person that comes into my life for You. Help me be ready to speak a blessing over the people You have entrusted to my care. Amen.

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Favor

1 Samuel 1-2

But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod.

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men. 1 Samuel 2:18, 21b, 26

Hannah's boy has been given and dedicated to the LORD. He is growing up in the presence of the LORD. This is a significant sentence in the context of the chapter, since most of what is talked about is the sinful example of Eli's sons. Samuel is ministering before the LORD while the sons of Eli are treating the offerings of the LORD with contempt. Samuel had been prayed for earnestly and conceived miraculously. Hannah was a parent who kept her vow to present this boy to the LORD. The LORD would then take the offering of that child and Samuel would become a mighty man of faith and an example. He grew in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men. While the surroundings that Samuel grew up in could easily have led him from the LORD, the dedication of Hannah and the faithfulness of God shaped and formed the heart of this great priest. I must look to have my heart always shaped by the LORD by being constantly aware of His presence in my life.

Dear Father, thank you for the example of Your faithfulness in the life of Samuel. Help me to remain aware of Your presence and Your power. Keep me in awe of You. Amen.

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Worship

1 Samuel 3-4

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:7, 10

Samuel has been in the presence of the LORD and yet has not known the LORD. The first verse of the chapter may help us understand why, "In those days, the word of the LORD was rare." So when Samuel heard the LORD, he did not know Him. But then, at Eli's instruction, Samuel asked God to speak to him because he was a servant. I remember the time in my life before I knew the LORD. I was raised in His presence by good parents in a good church, but I did not yet know Him for myself. And then God called to me! I turned to Him and gave Him my life and my love. My life changed and now I have His Word. The only way that God will speak rarely now is if I do not open the Bible, for He speaks through the Bible all the time. This is worship. God speaking to me through His Word and me speaking to Him in response. Speak to me, LORD! Your servant is listening. I worship and adore You.

O Lord, thank You for speaking to me. Thank You for calling to me. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for allowing me to worship You. You have my heart. It is Yours. I am Your servant, willing to serve You. Amen.