The Power of Worship

2 Samuel 22:4 I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.

Introduction:

• 2 Chronicles chapter 20 contains an incredible testimony to the power of worship.
  o Three of Israel’s worst enemies
    ▪ decided that they would combine their armies
    ▪ and together they would overthrow the people of God.
  o It was unexpected and it was unprovoked.
    ▪ Trouble suddenly came upon Judah
      ▪ like the clap of thunder
      ▪ that shatters the peacefulness of a clear sky.
  o It was sudden,
    ▪ it was frightening
    ▪ and it was unforeseen.

• Life is that way sometimes.
  o It happens to churches,
  o to families
  o and to individual men and women
    ▪ just like it happened to Judah.

• From out of the blue, a serious difficulty arises.
  o The institution that you have invested yourself in
    ▪ suddenly fails and threatens all of your future.
  o In an instant your hopes are dashed
    ▪ and your dreams are threatened.
  o Without any forewarning,
    ▪ a friend that you relied upon
    ▪ becomes a foe that is working to destroy you.

• The bright brilliant morning
  o becomes a cloudy afternoon
    ▪ and the horizon of your life darkens
      ▪ with the threat of a horrifying storm.

• The messenger came running from afar,
  o with the news of impending defeat.
    ▪ A huge army is on its way from beyond the Dead Sea to fight you.
  o There’s no time to waste—they are already on the march.
    ▪ There’s only a little time left to prepare.

• Jehoshaphat was shaken.
  o The nation was stirred.
It was the kind of news that sends a cold chill down your spine.

- But, although the situation seemed hopeless,
  - *these were not a people without any hope.*
    - In their moment of crisis,
      - they turned their hearts towards heaven.

- Led by their king,
  - they came together from far and wide
  - to the house of God
    - where they called fervently
    - on the name of the Lord.

- That’s always the best solution.
  - You can’t control your life,
  - you don’t choose when the storms come,
    - but you can control what happens next.

- There were a lot of things they could have done.
  - They could have gone running to their allies
    - and tried to raise an army to meet their foe.
  - They could have gone to their bankers
    - and raised the funds to hire mercenaries to fight for them.
  - They could have expended their efforts
    - in fortifying their cites and bracing themselves for an attack.
  - But they realized that their only real hope was in God
    - so they turned to him in their hour of need.

- And God heard their cry.
  - In the midst of the congregation,
    - while they were still gathered together,
    - while they were still in the very act of prayer,
      - God sent an answer.

- God moved upon a Levite named Jahaziel
  - who delivered a word from God.
  - God’s message was simple:
    - Don’t be afraid.
    - Don’t worry about this evil horde that is rising against you.
      - The battle is not yours it belongs to God.
    - Tomorrow you will go out to meet them
      - but you won’t have to lift a hand to defeat them.
    - Go to the battlefield.
      - Stand against your enemy
        - and see the salvation of God!

- Emboldened by the word of God,
  - Jehoshaphat arose the next morning
    - and assembled his army.

- But before they ever set out on the march to meet their foe,
Jehoshaphat appointed singers to march in front of the warriors.

- It must have been a sight to behold.
  - There was an army in all of its battle dress,
    - pennants snapping in the breeze,
    - commanders arrayed in their finery,
      - troops marching in step.
  - The highly polished armor was glistening in the sun.
    - The leather and mail creaked and jingled with every step.
      - And that mighty army bristled with the weapons of war.
    - Spears and javelins,
    - bows and swords,
      - all were at the ready
      - as the strength of Judah marched to battle.
- But out in front of the army
  - there was an even greater display.
- Levitical musicians,
  - arrayed in the sacred vestments of holy priests,
    - marched before the soldiers.
- They carried no weapons,
  - but their mouths were filled with praise.
- And when that army set out that day,
  - from the very first step of the journey
    - until they finally laid eyes on their foe,
    - the hills and valley around them echoed
    - with the song of those priests
      - as they praised the Lord
      - in the beauty of his holiness.
- Oh, they must have looked ridiculous.
  - They must have been quiet the spectacle.
    - An army preceded by a choir.
- Soldiers arrayed in their battle gear,
  - being led by singers clothed in the vestments of worship.
- But the Bible tells me that, as they sang and praised the Lord,
  - God set ambushes against the enemy.
- The men of Mount Seir were late to join the invading army
  - and, in an effort to get into the fight,
    - they prepared ambush positions
    - so that they could attack Judah as it marched to war.
- But God somehow, clouded their understanding
  - and they mistakenly ambushed the wrong army.
- All of a sudden, as the priests sang praises unto God,
  - their enemies began to fight among themselves.
• And the Bible tells us that when the army of Judah
  o finally arrived at the designated battlefield,
    ▪ they topped the rise and looked down into the valley,
    ▪ only to discover that the battle had already been fought,
    ▪ the enemy had slaughtered itself
    ▪ and the valley was filled with the dead and dying soldiers
      • that had come against them.
• Judah won a mighty victory without ever raising its sword.
  o The battle was won in their worship.
• That story, like no other, illustrates the power of worship.
  o When you can’t do anything else,
    ▪ you can shout.
  o When you can’t do anything else,
    ▪ you can worship.
  o When you can’t do anything else,
    ▪ you can glorify God.
    ▪ There’s power in your worship!
• Now Jehoshaphat’s victory was won, long after King David was dead
  o but David was no stranger to the power of worship.
• He immortalized the connection between worship and victory in Psalm 18,
  o and had that Psalm repeated at the end of his life in **2 Samuel 22:4**.
    ▪ David said, *I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.*
• David put it in song early in his life
  o but it was still on his heart at the end of his life,
    ▪ every time I’ve worshipped God,
      ▪ I have tasted the sweetness of his deliverance.
  o Every time I have lifted my voice to him
    ▪ and began to extol his wonderful greatness,
      ▪ he has saved me from my enemies.
• At the end of his life,
  o David wanted those who would follow him to know,
    ▪ the Lord has been my rock,
      ▪ he has been my fortress
      ▪ and he has been my deliverer.
• Hard times are going to come.
  o Trouble is going to take you by surprise.
    ▪ A sudden dark cloud is going to hide the glory of the sun.
  o But when that happens to me, let me tell you what I do.
    ▪ In my distress, in my times of trouble and tragedy,
      ▪ *I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised:*
      ▪ **SO shall I be saved from my enemies.**
• There is so much in that word “SO.”
  o In the face of certain defeat,
    ▪ I worshipped God and he delivered me.
  o When I stared a bear in the eyes,
    ▪ I worshipped the name of God and he delivered me.
  o When a lion threatened the flock
  o and fear rose in my heart
    ▪ I reminded myself of the greatness of my God
      • and he saved me and my daddy’s sheep.
  o When I stood before the giant,
  o and he towered over me,
    ▪ I reminded myself of the glory of my God,
      • the God of the armies of Israel,
      • and God fought my battle for me!
• Over and over again,
  o throughout the long and storied history of David’s life,
    ▪ in the face of defeat,
    ▪ in the presence of his enemies,
    ▪ he’s proven it over and over again:
      • I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised:
        • so shall I be saved from my enemies.

Worship
• I want you to understand something about worship tonight.
  o Sometimes we approach worship
    ▪ as if it is something that God needs from us.
  o It is as if we have this image of God
    ▪ as this petulant king that will only bless us
      • if we massage his ego,
      • if we tell him how great he is.
• Nothing could be further from the truth.
  o God doesn’t NEED your worship.
• All of creation echoes with the worship of God.
  o The angels in heaven glorify his name 24/7.
• They don’t worship him because he needs to be worshipped.
  o They worship him because he deserves to be worshipped.
  o They worship him because he is worthy to be worshipped.
• Creation itself, the sun, the stars, the planets
  o and everything in the far reaches of the universe
    ▪ declares his glory.
  o They don’t worship him because he needs it,
    ▪ they worship him by their very existence
      • because he created them.
  o They stand testimony to the incredible glory of God!
• You’ve got to understand this about worship:
• it was never about what God needs.

  • God doesn’t command you to worship him
    o because He NEEDS your worship.
  • God commands you to worship him
    o **because YOU NEED to worship him!**

• Worship causes you to stop
  o and consider the greatness of your God.
• Worship sharpens your sensitivity to the glory of God.
  o Worship causes you to begin to see
    ▪ how mighty and majestic that God is.
  o If you don’t worship him,
    o if you stop considering his glory,
    o if you stop reminding yourself of his mighty deeds,
      ▪ you lose perspective of how great he really is.
    o And worship is really about perspective.
      ▪ It’s about sharpening you soul’s vision of God’s greatness.
  o When you worship him,
    ▪ you begin to shift the focus of your vision
      • from your troubles and trials
      • to the matchless ability of your God.

• When you begin to worship him,
  o your faith is loosed to see God as he really is.
• That’s the heart of what David was saying:
  o As I call upon the Lord
    ▪ I am confronted with the fact
      ▪ that he is worthy to be praised.
  o And the more I praise him
    ▪ the more I recognize his worth.
  o The more I exalt him,
    ▪ the more I remind myself of his majesty
      • and his greatness,
    o the more I realize just how worthy he is to be praised.
      ▪ **So shall I be saved from my enemies!**

**Worship And Faith**

• Early in his life, David discovered a powerful truth:
  o Worship provokes faith.
• Worship stirs my heart,
  o not just to see the greatness of God,
    ▪ but to believe in the God
      • who is greater than I can see.
• Worship arouses faith in my heart,
  o for as I consider the majesty of God
    ▪ I begin to realize that God’s majesty has no end.
• When I think of his goodness,
  ▪ I begin to realize that his goodness knows no boundaries.
• When I contemplate the mighty things that he can do,
  ▪ I begin to realize that there is nothing that he cannot do!
• When I consider how far God will go to preserve
  ▪ those who call upon his name
  ▪ I begin to realize that there is nothing that he will not do
  • for those who call on him!

• You see worship isn’t about
  o making God feel good about who he is,
    ▪ worship is about causing me
      • to expand my vision,
      • to open my understanding,
      • to consider how great my God really is.
  o Worship stirs up my faith!

• Let me ground this in scripture for you.
  o Paul in diagnosing the human condition
    ▪ arrives at the conclusion that unbelief is,
      • in the most basic sense,
      • a failure to worship God.
  o Romans 1:21 *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*
    ▪ When they knew God
      ▪ they refused to glorify him as God.
    ▪ They didn’t give him the worship that He was worthy of.
  • Watch this:
    o God didn’t change.
      ▪ His glory wasn’t diminished one bit
        • by their failure to worship.
      ▪ His strength,
      ▪ his power,
      ▪ his majesty,
      ▪ none of it was diminished
        • by their failure to worship.
  • Their worship wasn’t for God’s benefit.
    o When they refused to worship God,
      ▪ God just kept right on being God.
    • **Their failure to worship had a negative effect on them, not God.**
      o When they didn’t worship God,
        ▪ they became vain in their imaginations
        ▪ and their foolish hearts were darkened.

• You’ve got to get this:
Worship has a positive impact
- on the way you think
- and the way you see.

- When they failed to worship it affected their minds,
  - it affected the way they thought about their situation
    - and it caused their foolish hearts to be darkened.
  - It affected the way they see things.

- That tells me that when you worship God
  - it has a positive impact on the way you think
    - and the way you see things.
  - Some of you feel like you are stumbling through the darkness.
    - You don't have any clear direction in your life.
    - Everything seems to be going wrong.
  - You've struggled with an answer,
    - you've wrestled with the problem,
      - but it seems that you are wrestling in vain.
  - The very imagination of your mind is in vain,
    - you can't come up with an answer.

- Can I suggest to you
  - that worship has the power to change that!
    - It is time to get your mind off of all of your vain solutions
      - and shift your focus to the greatness of your God.
    - It is time to quite considering all the things
      - that you can and cannot do
      - and consider the things that God has already done in your life.
  - When you begin to worship him, your faith will grow.
    - When you begin to worship him,
      - you will turn loose the power of God in your situation.
  - As long as your mind is fixated
    - on the limitations of your circumstance,
  - as long as you are captivated
    - by your abilities and inabilities,
      - the situation is never going to change.

- But, when you begin to worship him.
  - When you begin to consider his abilities,
    - what he has done,
    - what he is capable of doing...

- When your soul begins to sing
  - nothing is impossible with God – Faith is loosed!
    - And faith, my friend, can move mountains.

- Let me see if I can wrap this up.
  - Faith is, according to the writer of Hebrews,
    - the substance of things hoped for,
The Power Of Worship

- the evidence of things not seen.
  - Faith has a vision
    - that is not limited by what we have seen with our natural eyes,
      - it operates in the realm of hope.
  - Because of that, faith is not bound
    - by the natural limitations that bind us.
  - Faith isn't defined by the doctor's report,
    - instead it hopes for a miracle.
  - Faith isn't hindered by our view of reality,
    - instead it believes for what it has not yet seen.
  - Here's the key to faith,
    - it sees what it looks for
      - and worship causes us to look for the glory of God.
  - Worship causes us to search out
    - the majesty and the greatness of our God.
  - Worship causes us to consider
    - that nothing is impossible with God
      - and all of a sudden as we worship God
        - in the splendor of his glory,
      - faith sees what it is looking for
        - and our soul leaps with the expectation
          - that God can do for us
            - what we could never do for ourselves!
    - Worship enables us to encounter the power of God.
      - If you need a miracle,
        - worship him.
      - If you are walking through the valley,
        - worship him.
      - If you find that you are facing an enemy that is greater than you,
        - can I suggest that you worship him!
      - Worship will change the very landscape of your life.
      - Worship will cause such a transformation in your heart
        - that it will be as if you stepped from a dark room
          - into the brightness of the noon day.
  - Worship Him
    - and let your heart imagine what God can do.
  - Worship him
    - and let your heart clearly see
      - that he that is for us
        - is far and away greater
          - than he that is against us!
  - Worship Him!

Close
- Job had one of those days like Jehoshaphat.
o It came out of the blue.
o It was completely unexpected.

• The messengers began to bring their tidings of terror,
o one right on the heels of the other.
• First word arrived that the oxen and donkeys had been stolen
  o and the servants that watched over them were murdered.
• Then, while he was still talking,
o the next messenger came and reported the lightning had fallen from heaven
  ▪ and killed all of Job’s sheep and his shepherds.
• While he was still talking the next arrived
  o and said that the Chaldeans had raided the camels
  ▪ and massacred the camel drivers.
• While he was still talking,
o another messenger arrived and said,
  ▪ “Your children were having a party at the home of the oldest brother
  ▪ when a tornado swept in off the desert
  ▪ and struck the house.
  ▪ They all died.”

• In the wake of such tragic news,
o as he learned that everything in his life was ruined
o as he heard that all of his wealth was destroyed
o and that his precious children were all dead,
  ▪ the Bible says that Job got to his feet,
  ▪ ripped his robe, shaved his head,
  ▪ then fell to the ground and worshiped.
• Now there’s a man who recognizes the power of Worship.
o Reeling from the tragic news,
  ▪ shaken to his core,
  ▪ troubled in his spirit,
o as he seeks to come to terms with the terrible situation
  ▪ some godly intuition inside of him
  ▪ imparts an understanding to his heart.
o If I’m going to make it through this,
  ▪ I need to expand my vision of my God.
o If I’m going to overcome this,
  ▪ I need to get a glimpse of the glory and majesty of God.
o My heart is overwhelmed;
  ▪ it is time to run to the one who is my rock and my refuge.

• All too often, in times of trouble and despair
  o we turn somewhere else,
o everywhere else,
and pursue anything but worship.

- We walk into the house of God
  - with a dejected, defeated spirit.
- That just goes to show
  - that we don’t realize the power of our worship!
- If you would follow the example of scripture,
  - if you would join yourself with the likes of Jehoshaphat, Job and King David,
    - you would learn that worship provokes your faith
      - and nothing is impossible to the man or woman
      - who will put their faith in God!

- They may have looked ridiculous.
  - They might been quiet the spectacle.
    - An army preceded by a choir.
  - Soldiers arrayed for battle gear,
    - being led by singers clothed in the vestments of worship.
- But I come tell you tonight that there was more power in their worship than there was in their army!
  - Because their army was limited to what they could do.
  - But their worship invoked the one who could do what they could never do.