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Scripture: Jehosheba ~ 2 Kings 11

World War II produced its share of heroes and heroic deeds. Although names such as General Douglas MacArthur and General George S Patton may be more familiar to us from the history books, there were many others whose individual acts of bravery, although somewhat overlooked with the passage of time, played a significant role in the eventual outcome and the saving of lives.

One of these people was a Belgian woman named Andree de Jongh. Are you familiar with her? Let me share a bit of her story.

The country of Belgium was neutral when the war started in 1939 but they were invaded by the German Forces on May 10, 1940. After 18 days of fighting, the Belgian military surrendered to the Germans and the country was occupied by Germany until 1944. This surrender was ordered by King Leopold III without consultation with his government and it was a decision that was not looked on favourably by many Belgians, including Andree de Jongh.

After the German invasion of Belgium, De Jongh joined the Belgian Resistance and moved to Brussels where she became a Red Cross volunteer mainly caring for captured Allied troops. In Brussels during this time, hiding in safe houses were many British soldiers who had been left behind as their units fled the fighting and also many airmen who were survivors of military airplanes that had been shot down over Belgium.

A defining moment came for De Jongh when she was convicted that she needed to do something to help these soldiers who were left stranded in Nazi

occupied Belgium and assist them in getting to safety. So, with incredible courage and wit, she organized and led, the “Comet Line”. So named because of the speed needed to whisk these soldiers to safety.

The “Comet Line” was a series of safe houses that these soldiers were secretly moved to, from Brussels through occupied France, then to neutral Spain and then on to Britain. De Jongh secured civilian clothes for these soldiers as well as fake ID papers as she helped over 400 Allied soldiers escape to safety. She personally escorted more than 118 Airman through the rugged Pyrenees Mountain range between France and Spain. The “Comet Line” became the most successful escape route in the entire war.

Unfortunately in 1943, it was betrayed by a farm worker and DeJongh and others were captured at one of the safe houses. After being tortured by the Gestapo, she admitted to being the leader of the “Comet Line” but because of her age and petit stature, the Germans did not believe her so she was sent to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp (the same camp where Corrie Ten Boom was detained).

At Ravensbruck, despite being subjected to deplorable conditions, De Jongh continued to help those around her. Eventually, she fell desperately ill and was near starvation, when she was finally liberated by the allied troops in 1945.

After the war, she was honoured by the British, Belgium and American government and made a Belgian countess. Those she helped to escape described her as “always smiling and brimful of

enthusiasm. She was the force, the power and the inspiration that brought us from Belgium to safety”.

Andree de Jongh died in 2007 at the age of 90 in Brussels. Hundreds of soldiers in World War II owe their lives to her because of a decision she made, a defining moment not to ignore the plight of those around her but instead, risk her own safety to provide a means for them to escape German capture.

It is amazing what can happen when faced with a defining moment decision, would you agree? Some of you know this first hand because you have been in these situations and have perhaps even surprised yourself by the calm and decisive manner in which you have handled yourself and made that important decision.

As you know, we are in a summer message series at North Park that we entitled, ***In the Moment. Decisions that Change our Lives Forever.*** As we have been stating all throughout this series, life is full of defining moments but the truth is, most of us will never be placed in a situation where the outcome is literally, life or death.

A defining moment occurs when we are confronted with a situation or circumstance that has the potential to impact the way that we live. It demands that we make a decision that, regardless of the choice we make, it will change us forever.

The bible is filled with examples of defining moments in the lives of people. The consequences of these choices, in these defining moments, sometimes drew these people closer to God and sometimes moved them farther away.

Through the first half of the summer, we have pondered some examples from scripture of people who had defining moments in their faith journey. Those include, Jesus, David, Moses, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the woman at the well from John 4.

Our prayer is that as we consider these biblical examples, our defining moments in life will be ones that draw us closer to Jesus rather than away.

Today I want to draw your attention to an “in the moment” situation that is found in the book of 2 Kings in the Old Testament. Like the story I told

you earlier of Andree De Jongh and how her actions saved hundreds of lives, the woman in this biblical story that we are looking at today, literally impacted world history. Without her decisive action, in the moment, things in our world would have unfolded differently, but this woman is often overlooked in the bible. Her story is one of the hidden gems of the Old Testament but like any good plotline, it is filled with breathtaking, heart pounding moments of intrigue, murder and mystery. Have I got your attention now?

Let me set the scene as I remind you of a few things. 1 and 2 Kings in the bible describes a time in the history of God’s people that was actually pretty bleak. Not content to have God lead them, the Israelite people looked around at all the other nations of the day and realize, *they all had an earthly King and we don’t!* So the elders of Israel go to God’s prophet at the time, Samuel and say, *hey, we want a King just like everyone else.*

1 Samuel 8:6-7

Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the LORD for guidance. “Do everything they say to you,” the LORD replied, “for they are rejecting me, not you. They don’t want me to be their king any longer.

So, the Israelites request is seen as a rejection of God as their king and an act of idolatry. God has Samuel warn the people of the negative consequences of having a king but the people persist and finally God relents and says to Samuel,

1 Samuel 8:22

.....give them a king.”

It starts with Saul, the very first King of the Israelites but that ended in disaster and then came David, a man after God’s own heart. In fact, David is so beloved that God makes a covenant with him, a binding agreement. God tells David that,

2 Samuel 7:16

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

In other words, through the lineage of David, the Messiah of the world, Jesus, will one day come to humanity.

After David's reign came his son Solomon who started off his kingship pretty well but by the end of his reign, the Kingdom of Israel had split into two because of strife and conflict. Now there was Israel to the North and Judah to the south.

Each Kingdom went on to have about 20 successive Kings and with the exception of a few, most were pretty shoddy. Some were downright evil. They didn't remain faithful to the covenant made with God, they led their people into idolatry and they were generally corrupt and unjust.

This is a dismal chapter in the history of God's people. This is where we pick up our story today.

The southern kingdom of Judah had just been ruled by a fairly decent king, Jehoshaphat. He worshipped the Lord and destroyed a lot of the idols but he made one very big mistake. As a political move, he arranged for his son and his heir to the throne, Jehoram to marry one of the daughters of Ahab. The nation of Judah would pay for this mistake for years to come. Ahab was a King in the Northern kingdom of Israel and he was despicable. His wife, Jezebel was equally as wicked. So you can imagine what their daughter, Athaliah must have been like, being raised in a home like this.

After the death of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram became King and married Athaliah and that was the beginning of one big happy family, right? Hold on. This couple was messed up and as a result, their family was dysfunctional. Jehoram was not a "chip off the old block" of his dad.

Instead of worshipping God, he compelled the people to turn from God and worship idols, and he killed off all of his brothers. The bible says that,

2 Kings 8:18

He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

So why you might ask, didn't God just blow the whole thing up and start over? It was because He made a promise to David that through his lineage would come the Messiah.

In *2 Kings 8:19* it says even despite Jehoram's evil ways,

... the LORD did not want to destroy Judah, for he had promised his servant David that his descendants would continue to rule, shining like a lamp forever.

Jehoram eventually dies and his youngest son, Ahaziah becomes king. He reigns only one year before he is killed in battle. Look at what it says about his legacy in,

2 Chronicles 22:3-4

Ahaziah also followed the evil example of King Ahab's family, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong. He did what was evil in the LORD's sight,

He did evil and all the while, his mother was prompting him. Do you remember who his mother is? Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Can you imagine? This guy's mother encouraged him to do wrong. Doesn't that just blow all of preconceived notions of what a mother should be?

In our home when our four children were growing up, it was me who nudged them to talk with their mouth full, wear a baseball hat to the dinner table and burp the alphabet, not Carolyn. She was the mom, always setting the good example. In this story, it is Ahaziah's mom, Athaliah who is prodding him to do wrong. That is how wicked this woman was. Does that give you a bit of an idea of how messed up things were during this time? That is what leads us to our text for today. King Ahaziah is now dead and who is in charge of Judah now? Listen as I read,

2 Kings 11:1-3

When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah of Judah, learned that her son was dead, she began to destroy the rest of the royal family. But Ahaziah's sister Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Ahaziah's infant son, Joash, and stole him away from among the rest of the king's children, who were about to be killed. She put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom, and they hid him from Athaliah, so the child was not murdered. Joash remained hidden in the Temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled over the land.

I told you, this story is full of suspense, murder and intrigue! While Athaliah is on a murderous rampage to claim the throne, who ends up being the unlikely hero in the story? It is Jehosheba, the half-sister of Ahaziah, the dead king. Obviously, she was present on the day that word arrives at the palace that the king has been killed. Put yourself in her shoes. She begins to see soldiers storming the royal palace, rushing from room to room, killing all of Ahaziah's sons. She hears from one of the servants that her evil step-mother is cementing her rule in a bold power grab now that her son, the king is dead. She has ordered the execution of anyone who may have a claim on the throne, even if it means killing her own grandchildren. Jehosheba is probably not surprised by Athaliah's actions. She knew this woman was evil. She grew up with her!

Although no doubt gripped by fear at the carnage that is taking place before her, Jehosheba has a very important decision to make, in the moment. Just as Andree De Jongh had a decision to make when she became aware of the many soldiers hiding out in fear of being captured by the Nazis during World War 2. Would she do something to help, even if it meant risking her own life?

Jehosheba's fear probably turned to sadness at the realization that she is about to lose all of her nephews, destroying God's promise of the Messiah coming through the royal lineage of David. Through her sobs and tears, she maybe even uttered a quick prayer, *Please God, help them*. Maybe Andree De Jongh even prayed a prayer like that for the hidden allied soldiers. *Please God, help them*.

Have you ever prayed a prayer like that? *Please God, help them*. Maybe for a friend who you know is going through a difficult relationship strain. Or for a relative who has lost a job or a neighbour who is grieving the death of a spouse. *Please God, help them*.

Have you ever considered that you just may be the help for that person that you are praying for? Have you ever thought of that? Maybe you have some connections for that unemployed relative, or you can be a listening ear for that friend going through a relationship issue or you can offer some sort of practical help, a meal or cut the grass of that grieving neighbour.

Last week, I had a chance to meet with some ladies from North Park who were concerned for a widowed friend of theirs. We started out praying for this woman, *please God, help her*. Then as we started chatting about her needs, it became abundantly clear to me that God was helping this woman. Through this group of ladies!

I was humbled by the love and devotion they were demonstrating to her in very practical ways. They were offering meals, drives and helping her to organize and pay her bills. I just thought, *this is the church in action, doing what God has called us to do as we care for one another*. We can be the answer to someone's prayer. Do you see that?

Andree De Jongh, may have prayed for God to help those stranded soldiers and maybe they were praying that God would send them someone to save them, and through her conviction, she stepped up. As unlikely as she may have seemed to take on the task given her age and smaller stature, she realized that good wishes and prayers as well-meaning as they were, weren't enough. She had to take action.

Back to the story. In the midst of all the horrendous violence that was going on around Jehosheba, she has a moment of clarity. She remembers that the infant child Joash's room is at the opposite end of the palace from where Athaliah's henchmen are conducting the searches.

The screams that are echoing throughout the hallways almost paralyze Jehosheba but she knows time is of the essence. So, she makes a decision, in the moment. A defining moment decision. With laser focus, she rushes to the young prince's room hoping it is not too late. She tries to put it out of her mind what would happen to her if Athaliah finds out about her betrayal.

As she reaches the baby's room, Jehosheba is greatly relieved to find Joash sleeping soundly in the arms of his frightened nurse. She gestures for the nurse to bring the child and follow her. After a quick glance down the hallways to ensure the coast was clear, Jehosheba leads them both to an out of the way bedroom to ensure their safety.

Meanwhile, Athaliah's thugs have reported to her that the mission has been accomplished, all the

princes have been killed or so they thought. While Athaliah is no doubt reveling in her victory, Jehosheba waits for the cover of darkness before she scurries young Joash and his nurse off to the temple, hidden and protected from the one who wants him dead. Now admittedly, I have taken a little liberty in filling in some details to the story, but you can be assured that this scene would have been much more dramatic than even I have made it.

Jehosheba and her husband, Jehoiada, the temple high priest would ensure that Joash was properly tended to and guarded for six years while his evil grandmother, ruled the land. Finally, the time came when Joash could assume the kingship. Athaliah was forcefully overthrown and killed, a somewhat expected end for someone who had lived such a self-centred and cruel life, and Joash was crowned King. When that time came, it says in,

2 Kings 11:12

Then Jehoiada brought out Joash, the king's son, placed the crown on his head, and presented him with a copy of God's laws. They anointed him and proclaimed him king, and everyone clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"

None of this would have been possible without the brave actions of a rather unexpected heroine, Jehosheba and a decision she made, in the moment. Jehosheba, the name of a biblical figure that you had probably never heard of until today. Just like Andree De Jongh, she was a rather obscure figure in history but both were unlikely heroes all because when faced with a defining moment in their lives, they chose to step up and take action and as a result, lives were saved. In the case of Jehosheba, her decisive action in saving Joash literally changed world history by persevering the royal line of David through which the Messiah Jesus, the Saviour of the world would come.

So, what are some of the things we can learn from Jehosheba's life?

1. God can use anybody.

I talked a little bit last week during the message on the Woman at the Well in John 4, the dismal status of a woman in the ancient culture of the bible. Some

of you may rightly argue that woman continue to be subjugated in our world even today. But that was not the original intent of our creator God and certainly wasn't the way that Jesus engaged with women. As a society, we need to rectify this discrimination.

The story of Jehosheba, represents that God can and does use anybody for his purposes. All he desires is faithful openness to his work in your life. You may be listening to this message and feel that you just aren't good enough to be used by God. Or maybe you think that you aren't smart enough or strong enough or talented enough. Or you are a woman.

All of those excuses were used by people in the bible (think Moses, Gideon, Paul and Jehosheba) but God smashes through them, and says, *do you trust me, do you have faith in me?* He does some pretty amazing things through people whose hearts are set on Him. Many of you know this because he has done some wonderful things through you as well. God can use any body.

The second thing we can learn from Jehosheba's life;

2. We need to be ever vigilant of opportunities to help others.

Jehosheba was presented with an opportunity to rescue Joash and although it could have been risky and costly to her, she took it. In doing so, she prevented the Davidic line from going extinct. That challenges me, just as the story of Andree De Jongh challenged me.

Mostly because I feel all too often, I am good with the words of comfort of the prayers, *please God, help them* but then hold back in taking action. Honestly, I am convicted that often these words are just platitudes because I really don't want to put myself out too much and get involved in another person's life because it is inconvenient and can cost me some time and comfort. Isn't that pitiful?

About a month ago, a neighbour of ours died very suddenly in his home. His death was shocking to all of us.

Of course, Carolyn and I were there to offer words of comfort and support to his widow shortly after his death. We were definitely praying for her.

The next week, we attended a memorial in his honour and again offered any help we could give to his widow. She responded the way that most people do, *thanks but I am okay. I will let you know.*

A few days later, I was cutting my lawn and I looked up and saw her taking the garbage out and she kind of laboured putting the containers at the curb and I just thought, *Paul that is one practical way that you could offer your help.* Each time, I walk by her house, I ponder ways that I could step in and assist her during this difficult time.

The truth is, not everyone wants to be helped and not everyone feels comfortable asking for help but we can too often use that as an excuse not to do anything or to look the other way. Our gestures may not have life and death consequences like Jehosheba or Andree De Jongh but they may just bring hope to someone, that they are not alone by demonstrating Christ's love to them in a practical way.

The truth is, all around us there are opportunities to reach out and help someone. Throughout the Covid Pandemic, we as a church, have been invited into practically helping places like *Sanctuary, My Sister's Place*, and our front line health care workers with donations of grab a snacks, toiletries and other needed supplies.

Due to your financial donations, we, as a church have been able to donate \$40 000 during these tough economic times, to agencies in London and Stratford who are providing care for those in need. Places like *Indwell* that helps provide affordable housing, *Safe Families* that has a passion to keep families intact, *The London Pregnancy and Family Support Centre*, that offers support to those with unplanned pregnancies and the *Stratford House of Blessing* who provide food and clothing for those in need in their city. There is no shortage of opportunities to help others, especially given our circumstances at this time.

Do you have a situation in your life at this moment, where you feel God is asking you to step in and get involved? We need to be vigilant of these

opportunities and be prepared to act, in the moment. This decision has the potential to change, if not save, lives.

The third thing we can learn from Jehosheba's Life:

3. ***Great movements of God often begin with a prompting of one person.***

Jehosheba initially acted alone to save Joash but then she brought her husband into it, who then brought many others into the plan to save and care for Joash until he was old enough to be crowned King.

Andree De Jongh spearheaded the idea to save trapped soldiers but it took a network of friends and volunteers to put together an elaborate system of safe houses spread across hundreds of kilometers.

Although God is the one who may convict us or prompt us to take action, he will never leave us alone. He is with us and he often brings others around us to support us.

Several years ago, as a Care Pastor at my former church, I had a young woman in her early twenties come and see me. She described how God was placing it on her heart to help those in need in some practical way. She told me she had a lot of stuffed animals that she had collected since she was a child and she wondered if there was a way to distribute those animals to children in need or going through a difficult time, just as source of comfort.

I didn't know exactly what to do, but we both agreed to pray about it and see what opportunities God brought our way.

A few weeks later, I had another young woman come to me with almost the same burden on her heart, to do something to help those in need. That is when I began to sense that God was up to something.

I brought the two women together and as only God can do, an idea was formed to create an evening around Christmas time when those in need within the community could come to the church and "shop" for gifts for their family.

The brand new gifts were all donated by the church community. They were wrapped by volunteers and the people were also served a meal as they waited. This one simple idea, this prompting from God to one young woman about stuffed animals has led to today, a ministry in that church that reaches out to over 500 families each year with gift, distributing thousands of dollars to help those in need pay their rent or bills and hundreds of church members are involved as volunteers. Amazing.

Great movements often start with God's prompting of one individual. When we take action and respond in faith, He will look after the details just as He did with Jehosheba.

The fourth thing we can learn from Jehosheba's life;

4. Even though we may be surrounded by non-Christians, God is still at work using His people.

Jehosheba grew up in an environment that was saturated with immorality and evil. In her household, the one true God of the bible was rejected. In her life, "environment" did not dictate her choices. Jehosheba stood apart from her family and chose to worship and serve God. She knew that her lifestyle was in direct conflict with what her family wanted but her faith in the Lord was her priority.

I honestly don't know what that would be like. I grew up in a Christian family. There was lots of support for my choices, but for some of you, that was or is not the case. You have found that your faith in Jesus has created a lot of conflict in your family. Maybe it has impacted your marriage because you have a husband or wife that does not share your beliefs, or your parents or a sibling and it has created a lot of stress in the family dynamics. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jehosheba?

Yet, in that environment of sin and depravity, God raises up a woman of faith and uses her for an important mission. She chose to do what was right regardless of the consequences to her because she knew God would ultimately care for her. She was a light in a dark environment in which many had strayed from God.

If you are watching today and you feel like you are all alone. You are the only one in your family that is a Christian, or the only one of your friends or the only one at work, remain faithful. You are not alone because God is with you and you can trust him to be at work in your life and to give you all that you need to be a light for Him in that dark place. Do you believe that? Jehosheba's story is a beacon of hope for you.

The fifth thing we can learn from Jehosheba's life;

5. God's faithfulness is constant.

God promised that the line of David will endure forever and through it, the Messiah of the world, Jesus would one day come to humanity. Even though, from our perspective, it looked a little precarious at times, God fulfilled his promise. He used the most unlikely person, Jehosheba in the most unlikely time.

Throughout the entire biblical narrative and throughout all of history, we have seen the way that God has defeated the schemes of the wicked. All of the evil empires of the day, Babylon, Persia, Rome, Nazi Germany even though they seemed to flourish for a time, were all defeated. Yet, through it all, the Kingdom of God has endured and flourished.

Athaliah sought to kill every male relative that was a descendant of David so she could gain power but she was doomed to failure. Why? Because the bible tells us that the wicked will not prosper. If you find yourself getting worked up about the state of the world today and all the evil that seems to be around us, remember this, the wicked are destined to fail.

Proverbs 13:9 says,

*The life of the godly is full of light and joy,
but the light of the wicked will be snuffed out.*

The story of Jehosheba in the Old Testament of the bible reminds us that God's faithfulness is constant and it is all about Jesus. Had the line of David been broken at this time, there would be no Jesus. There would be no Christianity and there would be no hope for the world.

Jehosheba's actions signaled that God would keep his covenant promise and Jesus would come to save humanity. Did you see now why this small obscure story, seemingly hidden away in the Old Testament is so important? Do you see why Jehosheba's *in the Moment* decision to save Joash had such an impact of history?

Through Jehosheba's life, we learn that;

1. *God can use anybody*
2. *We need to be ever vigilant of opportunities to help others.*
3. *Great movements of God often begin with a prompting of one person.*
4. *Even though we may be surrounded by non-Christians, God is still at work using His people.*
5. *God's faithfulness is constant.*

May this story encourage you to be attentive to God's work in your life and in the world around you. May you be open to his wisdom and discernment as you make those *in the Moment* decisions. And may you know that God is faithful. His gift of his Son, Jesus the Saviour of the world, is the greatest evidence that God keeps his promises. **Amen? Amen.**

In the Moment

Decisions that Change our lives Forever

Jehosheba ~ 2 Kings 11

With a friend, your family or in your small group, discuss the following questions.

1. We are at the half way point of our summer preaching series on defining moments in life. In what ways has this series challenged you? What are some decisions that you have made "in the moment" that have affected the way that you live? Have you had any of those moments this summer? If so, what were they?
2. Can you think of a rather obscure "hero" who has made an impact on your life? What was it about their life that made such an impression on you?

3. Have you ever had to make a decision, "in the moment" that had potential life and death consequences. Describe your experience.
4. Explain a situation in your life when you became aware of an opportunity to help someone. How did you respond and what was the result of your decision (to take action or not take action)?
5. Have you ever been in a situation where you were surrounded by those who did not have a faith in Jesus? How did you sense God's movement in your life during that time, to be a light for him in that seemingly dark place?
6. How do you react to the statement, "God's faithfulness is constant"? Where have you seen the faithfulness of God evident in your life? Have there ever been times when you have doubted the faithfulness of God? What happened to restore your trust in Him?

Prayer and Action Item

Pray for one another out of the key points that were discussed. Refer to the five main points that we can learn from the story of Jehosheba. Invite God to make you attentive to what he is teaching you this week through the life of Jehosheba.

1. *God can use anybody.*
2. *We need to be ever vigilant of opportunities to help others.*
3. *Great movements of God often begin with just a prompting of one person.*
4. *Even though we may be surrounded by non-Christians, God is still at work using His people.*
5. *God's faithfulness is constant.*