

THE BIG STORY

Power & Prophets

Week of
November 8

Worship

Connect Group / Family Discussion

Re-orienting our allegiance around the Lord as King

When you think of prophets in our lifetimes, who comes to mind and why?

The three stories from this past Sunday introduced three actions that the LORD undertakes through his prophets in relationship to the power of the kings: Anointing, Establishing and Rebuking. In our expressions of power and politics in America where do you recognize the voices that anoint power – establish power – or rebuke power (these do not need to be “Christian” voices).

Read 2 Samuel 12, the story of the Lord confronting Nathan through Daniel.

- What does the parable Nathan tells accomplish that direct confrontation may have failed to produce?

Serve

Following our King Jesus on Mission...

Re-orienting our actions in alignment with God's kingdom

Both the people of Israel and her kings were called to be covenant partners in God's rescue mission in the world – living out the kind of public justice and righteousness that demonstrated the just and righteous character of their true king, the LORD. But when those with power “despise the word of the LORD” and “do what is evil in his sight” it is the

- According to Nathan, what was David's failure in 12:9?
- Look at Psalm 51, David's prayer of confession after Nathan's confrontation. What strikes you?

Laurie taught that the first two prophetic functions of anointing and establishing have their fulfillment in Jesus, the Anointed One (Messiah) who established the kingdom of heaven on earth – so now discipleship takes up this 3rd prophetic function: taking the message of return out to the world in both word and in obedience action.

- How is the gospel a prophetic rebuke?
- Why is the call to return to God's grace so essential to avoid the mistake of “works righteousness” in our prophetic rebuke? (Works righteousness means to replace a “bad” human action with a “good” human action and figuring that formula can take care of things ...)

vulnerable in society who suffer the most.

As a Connect group, start a discussion about where you witness the vulnerable failing to flourish and thrive alongside those with more power. Ask these questions this week for further follow up next week:

- What are the circumstances that hurt or hinder abundant life for this person or group?
- What “word of the Lord” is being despised to contribute to this situation?
- What “word of the Lord” are we in danger of despising if we do nothing? (Or, to say it positively, what does God's word invite us to do in the face of this circumstance?)

Daily Worship & Reflections

The Bible readings this week follow the kings of Israel from Solomon through exile. Remember that after Solomon's reign the Kingdom divided into two – the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Elijah/Ahab stories are Northern Kingdom, while the Isaiah/Hezekiah stories are Southern. The Northern Kingdom fell to The readings from the history books are paired with Proverbs – wisdom writings that are associated with King Solomon in particular.

Monday, November 9

1 Kings 2-3, and Proverbs 1

"Unfortunately, many of us presume that the world is the ultimate threat and that God's function is to offset it. How different this is from the biblical position that God is far scarier than the world.... When we assume that the world is the ultimate threat, we give it unwarranted power, for in truth, the world's threats are temporary. When we expect God to balance the stress of the world, we reduce him to the world's equal... As I walk with the Lord, I discover that God poses an ominous threat to my ego, but not to me. He rescues me from my delusions, so he may reveal the truth that sets me free. He casts me down, only to lift me up again. He sits in judgment of my sin, but forgives me nevertheless. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but love from the Lord is its completion." (William D. Eisenhower, 'Fearing God' in Christianity Today.)

What fears have been looming large in life? What would it mean to shift focus today on fearing God?

Tuesday, November 10

1 Kings 8, 10-11 and Proverbs 3

"The crisis the church currently faces is that our individual and corporate worship do not produce the fruit of justice and righteousness that God seeks. This creates a crisis of faithfulness before God and a crisis of purpose before the world." (Mark Labberton, The Dangerous Act of Worship)

Are you and I in the habit of measuring the fruit of our individual and shared worship by the fruit it produces in our own lives or by the fruit it produces for the sake of others?

Wednesday, November 11

1 Kings 12, 16:29-18:46 and Proverbs 8

"Corporate and individual worship should lay out the power cards of life before the One who alone holds all power. The gospel redefines each card. Some cards we leave on the altar: pride, manipulation, lying, deception and coercion. Some cards we pick up again and in humility offer them to the world: health, education, race, opportunity, responsibility, friendship, advocacy or sacrifice. Or, on the most basic level, having enough to eat, a bed to sleep in, a home to live in, a school or a job." (Mark Labberton, The Dangerous Act of Worship)

What power cards are you invited to lay on the altar today? What is God inviting you to pick up?

Thursday, November 12

1 Kings 19, 21 and 2 Kings 2 – Proverbs 10

"Worship can teach us about true power, lead us to recognize and redefine false power, and commission us in the kind of gospel power that equips us for our mission of seeking justice, loving mercy and walking humbly before God." (Mark Labberton, The Dangerous Act of Worship)

Sometimes our acts of justice and mercy, humbly offered, feel more like the gentle wind that met Elijah than the powerful phenomenon that initially swept past his cave (1 Kings 19). Where was God in Elijah's story? Where can you walk with God in "true power"?

Friday, November 13

2 Kings 18-20 and Proverbs 25

"In Washington D.C. it is said that power is measured by access. Prayer is all about access to the God who reigns over all." (Mark Labberton, The Dangerous Act of Worship)

Do your prayers reflect a belief in the remarkable access to power that God has given for us to pray in Jesus' name?

Saturday, November 14

22:1-23:30 and 25 – Proverbs 31

"Israel's call in exile is to work out what it means to dwell in a foreign land and yet live like those who belong to Yahweh. The challenge is to demonstrate the distinctive character of righteousness and justice that shows where they truly live, even when every force of assimilation is upon them." (Mark Labberton, The Dangerous Act of Worship)

Today, in prayer, let's ask the question: am I assimilated to the culture around me or transformed by the culture of the kingdom of God?