

Sunday, August 6, 2023

First Lesson: 2 Chronicles 14:1

Second Lesson: Acts 10: 1-8

Sermon Series: Revivals that Move Mountains Week 5

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- We are continuing with week 5 of our 8-week sermon series called “Revivals that Move Mountains.” This is a sermon series that is designed to get our minds, hearts and bodies refueled, renewed, re-energized and refocused on the work of the ministry that is always before us;
- Therefore in unpacking the role in which revivals have played in the scriptures, I would like to use *author Geoff Waugh’s book Revival Fire*, that I mentioned last week; in which we now have a slide for just in case you would like to take some notes, that reveals *9 commonalities that these revivals shared*;
 1. They occurred in times of moral darkness and national depression.

2. Each began in the heart of a consecrated servant of God who became the energizing power behind it [*only 1 spark*].
3. Each revival rested on the Word of God, and most were the result of proclaiming God's Word with power.
4. All resulted in a return to the worship of God.
5. Each witnessed the destruction of idols where they existed.
6. In each revival, there was a recorded separation from sin.
7. In every revival the people returned to obeying God's laws.
8. There was a restoration of great joy and gladness.
9. Each revival was followed by a period of national prosperity.

- Therefore, today's goal will be to look at the revivals that are occurring in both of our lessons today; see how these commonalities might reveal itself to us, **with the hope that** they make speak to our situation today.
- Therefore in looking at the first lesson of 2 Chronicles 14:1, we are seeing number 2 of the list coming into fruition, for the individual who would set the spark of a revival in this instance would be King Asa.
- Therefore in giving a little background as to who King Asa was— King Asa was the third king of the southern kingdom of Judah, living from around 913 BC to 873 BC (An account of his life is in 2 Chronicles 14-16).
- He was a godly leader known for his revival of true worship in the country.
- Asa was well pleasing to the Lord.

- For not only did he remove idolatrous worship but he also commanded obedience to the law of Jehovah (vv. 2–5), which addresses item #4 on our list that says *All resulted in a return to the worship of God.*
- For this intensive reform he instituted was rewarded with a welcomed period of peace.
- However, how King Asa got to this period of peace was that after his diligent religious reform honoring the Lord, King Asa faced a critical situation.
- For invasion by Zerah threatened his kingdom.
- In earnest, believing prayer, his response was to go to the Lord in prayer and said, **“O Lord, there is no difference for you between helping the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let no mortal prevail against you.”** (v. 11).

- Therefore it is in this prayer that we witness King Asa admitting utter weakness in himself, and affirming his great faith in the might of the Lord that ultimately led to the revival of his nation.
- For King Asa was not disillusioned, for it was through the power of the Lord that he realized a remarkable deliverance (v. 12).
- Thereby making the learnings from King Asa's leadership reflect this idea that again and again, the strength of the Lord had been revealed on behalf of those who confess to weakness and cast themselves upon God in utter dependence.
- Applying King Asa's story to where we are today; I am reflecting on a meaningful conversation that occurred from our Wednesday Night's Applying the Sermon to Life class that resumed this past Wednesday, where many of us were drawn to the outcome that came from King Asa's reign of leadership, that is revealed in our single verse of

scripture today revealed in vs 1 where it says, *In his days the land was quiet for ten years.*

- As a community, we were trying to discern without much knowledge of who King Asa was at the time, whether the mentioning **of the land being quiet for ten years** was a good thing or a bad thing.
- Our instinct, which we now can be assured of was right, **was to assume that this quietness was a good thing.**
- For where our conversation led us as a class was to voice this admission that often times people seemed to be fueled by drama that inevitably leads to dysfunction within the system, whether it be in a family, classroom, business or church.
- To ensure that we are all on the same page, I want us to define drama first, so that we can then define what the text is referring to when it is naming that the land was quiet.

- So according to the online dictionary, **the first definition** of drama is to refer to a play for a theater, radio or television.
- **The second definition** of drama can be referred to as an exciting, emotional, or unexpected series of events or set of circumstances.
- **Now the urban dictionary definition** of drama is creating unnecessary stress about unimportant things; I.e. making a mountain out of a mole hill to get attention.
- Interestingly enough for my bible scholars out there who may find it odd that a preacher is even entertaining the topic of drama in her sermon, one might be interested in also knowing that the Bible has a thing or two to say about drama as well;
- For I stopped by to declare that 1 Thessalonians 4:11 teaches us *to aspire to live quietly, to mind our own affairs, and to work with our hands, as we are directed.*

- Another way that scholars have interpreted this scripture is to name that avoiding drama is part of leading a quiet and peaceful life, by not participating in drama and focusing on our own responsibilities.
- Therefore, in keeping this conversation in mind, helps us then to understand what is meant by the land being quiet for 10 years.
- For what I am envisioning in this quiet **was a land** where mutual respect and collaboration was fostered;
- **In this land**, there is being painted a picture of people living into what it means to love God and love neighbor,
- To recognize **in this land**, another scripture I would like to introduce of 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 comes to fruition and therefore becomes the living, breathing Word of God that states “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are

different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as He wishes.”

- You see even in this passage, we are shown that through the Spirit, all persons are given gifts for the good of the entire community.
- For **in this land** of quiet, each person is expected to use their gifts for the common good.

- For it would be a waste if that gift were not acknowledged by the community and put to good use.
- Hence, this is the vision that I have tried to intentionally cultivate within this community of Lincoln First;
- **A place** where we are community focused, community centered and community minded to share God's love to all;
- **A place** where we are committed to stay at the table with one another with this quietness becoming our ultimate goal;
- For although the quiet is counter cultural to what we may experience in the world that surrounds us;
- Another biblical story that comes to mind for our contemplation, draws me to the story of Elijah in the cave, who traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God; for Elijah feared for his life because 1 Kings 19:10 tells

us as I paraphrase it, that the people of Israel had broken their agreement with God, destroyed God's altars and killed God's prophets with swords—and Elijah felt that he was the only one left and cried out to the Lord, they are trying to kill me too.”

- It was then that Elijah learned about the power of the quiet himself firsthand, for God's voice was not found in the wind or in the earthquake or even in the fire....**but instead, God's vision....**
- **Instead Elijah's revival**— was found in the quiet gentle sound that was so rich with love and guidance, that the Word tells us in 1 Kings 19:13, **that when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave; ready to continue on with his work of sharing God's love and light to the world again.**
- And this quiet Church family, is not just within these new stories of scriptures that I have introduced out of 1 Thessalonians and 1 Kings;

- This quiet is also infused all within our Second lesson of Scripture out of Acts written by the disciple Luke, that may not be as apparent to us at first glance;
- However, it is because of these other stories I have brought in regarding being **in the quiet**, that we may be able to perceive it a little better now;
- For in giving some background to who would spark a revival within Cornelius this morning, it would be none other than God, God's self.
- However, in light of our conversation surrounding this terminology of quiet, I stopped by to declare that Cornelius would have never been able to receive such a vision from God in the first place, if Cornelius did not understand what it meant to be **in his own quiet**.
- For Cornelius was by occupation and position a centurion, or captain, of an Italian century (band) or a cohort.

- If it were the latter, which appears more likely than the former, then he was in command of 600 soldiers, men recruited in Italy and thus likely Roman citizens.
- The duties of a Roman centurion were similar to a present-day army captain.
- Like all the centurions appearing in the New Testament, Cornelius is favorably represented (cf. Matt. 8:5 and Luke 7:1–10).
- By religion he was an uncircumcised Gentile worshipper of the one true God, “a proselyte of the gate,” or a “God-fearer”; a devout, generous, prayerful, and religiously influential man.
- Luke is specific in designating Cornelius a **devout man**, or a sincere worshipper of the Jewish Jehovah, as opposed to Gentile idolatry.
- Luke’s statement that he was **one that feared God** is to be understood in reference to reverential

fear that inspired worship, rather than a servile fear.

- Either way I will reiterate, **it is because Cornelius was able to rest in his own quiet**, that he was able to receive the vision of God occurring in this passage of our second lesson today.
- **For the word tells us that Cornelius saw in a vision openly** (v. 3a). While praying at about three o'clock in the afternoon, **the ninth hour**, Cornelius was suddenly confronted with a supernatural vision in which an angel appeared to him from God with a special message.
- Luke is careful to indicate that Cornelius' vision was genuine, since it was at the stated hour of prayer when he would not have been asleep.
- And the purpose of this vision was that Cornelius was **the first Gentile converted to Christianity**, along with his household, and by Luke, recording this

event, clearly regards it as an event of the utmost importance in the history of the early Church.

- For this would be the beginning of the Church's decision **to admit Gentiles to full and equal fellowship with Jewish Christians.**
- For as God spoke to Cornelius, and as Cornelius sent the messengers to call Peter, God also spoke to Peter himself.
- For typically, this is how God operates.
- For God speaks to several people about a matter, not just one.
- Then confirmation is provided, and out of the mouth of two or three witnesses a word is established.
- For Peter had a bad habit of telling Jesus “no” (Matthew 16:22, John 13:8).
- For if we were to compare Peter’s response to God (**Not so, Lord!**) with Cornelius’ response to

God (What is it, Lord?); On that day, it seemed that Cornelius was more responsive to God than Peter was.

- For Peter had pretty much put God in a box of limitations, and now God was going to shake Peter up to change his thinking by way of Cornelius.
- Furthermore, why I am taking the time to really try to capture this dynamic between Cornelius and Peter, is because lo and behold **we are witnessing another way of how justice in words becomes justice in action;**
- For it relies upon all of us **finding our own quiet, so that we can** really be able to collaborate together;

- **So that we can** really be able to lean on one another;
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- **So that we can** really begin to see the vision that God is painting for us;
- For it is in our quiet moments, where I am convinced by this story and more; **that God will reveal something to each one of us; that is meant to be shared collectively;**
- That some of us will quite frankly miss, if **we do not do the work of being in our own quiet;**
- That furthermore won't be fully understood until we can come together as a people, to reflect what we have each individually learned in our own quiet;

- For this Church family is why we must fight to stay at the table with one another;
- Furthermore, this Church family is why being in the quiet is something we must keep making space in our lives to remain focused on;
- For there is a story that cannot be fully understood, comprehended and fully told, until we can truly learn how to be in this work together.
- For our Wednesday Night class asked a powerful question in light of our discussion that I will leave for us all to ponder with;
- They asked, "Who in our day is still receiving these visions?"
- My biggest aha moment I think I am naming but will keep unpacking as a result of this sermon

and our previous sermon series is this....**All of us!**

- **All of us** are being guided to receive a piece of this vision...
- It is therefore in our discovery of what it means to be in the quiet, we may be revived because now we are able to hear it.
- Let the church say Amen!