

The Child King

Preached: 1/10/2021; 1st Sunday after Epiphany – Germantown;

Welcome:

- Welcome to Germantown Church. Thank you for joining me
- Announcement: Suspending Sunday morning In Person Worship Gatherings at least through the end of February
 - Due to the resurgence of the COVID Virus
 - A concern about the risk to those who attend services
 - Recommendation by Government leaders
 - Letter from our Conference Administrator
 - This Youtube recording continue to be available
- We appreciate those of you who have supported our Church's ministry with your tithes and offerings. We appreciate your generosity. During this period when services are suspended you may mail your gifts or drop them off here at the Church.

Message

A Child Shall Lead Them

Whenever a young child demonstrates exceptional talent or ability, they seem to attract a lot of attention and respect of adults. The internet is filled with videos of children accomplishing remarkable feats – singing, other musical skills, leading others, scientific discoveries, academic accomplishments. Viewers seem to be drawn to watch them, sometime over and over. There is a story in the Bible of a young man who found himself in a position of great responsibility at a very young age. It could have been overwhelming to many children. But this young man grew into his role and made a significant impact on a whole nation of people. As we trace his life and his accomplishments, we discover that his progress and great accomplishments corresponded with his spiritual development. I believe that there is much that we can learn from his spiritual journey and apply to our lives and journey.

The young man that I'm talking about was a boy named Josiah. His story is found in 2 books in the Old Testament – 2 Kings 22 & 23, and in the book of 2 Chronicles 34 & 35. I love studying the books of the Old Testament. These books contain wonderful stories and spiritual lessons for us as followers of Jesus. These verses introduce us to Josiah.

Scripture

2 Chronicles 33:21 – 34:3

As the text tells us, Josiah became king at the age of 8 years. He reigned over God's people for 31 years. The writer of this passage tells us that Josiah was a good king. "**He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David.**" A little history will be helpful. The people of God were divided into 2 nations. Originally they were just one nation, known as the Nation of Israel. The first three kings of Israel were Saul, David and David's son Solomon. Saul was not a good leader. He disobeyed the Lord and God took the throne from Saul's family and placed David over the nation. David was always looked upon as Israel's greatest king. He loved God and led the people in serving the Lord. When David died his son Solomon became king. Solomon was very wise, but he was morally and spiritually weak. As a result of his influence the people began worshiping idols and gods other than the Lord. Because of Solomon's sins, God took part of the nation of Israel from the family of David and gave it to another. They became known as the nation of Israel. But for the sake of David, God preserved a portion of the nation for the family of David. That kingdom was called Judah. Judah was ruled by a series of kings, all of whom were descended from the line of David. Some of the kings were bad kings. They led the people away from God into idolatry and disobedience. God warned the nation of Judah that if they did not turn back to him and serve Him, He was going to allow them to be captured by a foreign power. They would be carried off to live in a foreign land, and forced to serve other kings. Some of the kings of Judah were good kings who led the people in obeying and serving God. Josiah was one of those good kings. As a matter of fact he was the best of Judah's kings after David. The writer here compares Josiah to David. If you wanted to complement a king, you would compare him to David.

Actually it is quite remarkable that Josiah was such an outstanding king. Conditions in the nation of Judah when he became king were terrible, morally and spiritually. Josiah's great grandfather was King Hezekiah. Hezekiah had led the nation in a time of spiritual renewal and revival. He had torn down shrines that were used in the worship of idols. He cleansed the nation. He led the people in a time of worship and obedience after many years of disobedience. When Hezekiah died, he was replaced by his son Manasseh. Manasseh was a terrible king. He was evil and disobedient. Here is a brief description of Manasseh's sins:

³ He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. ⁴ He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." ⁵ In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. ⁶ He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger.

God warned Manasseh to repent and abandon his sinful ways but he would not listen. Manasseh's sins so angered the Lord that God allowed him to be captured and held in captivity to the king of Assyria. Finally, while he was in prison in Assyria, Manasseh recognized his sins and repented and prayed to the Lord. God heard his prayer and allowed him to return to Jerusalem. He had a chance to undo some of the things he had done. He removed the idols from the Temple, and resumed Temple sacrifice to the Lord God. God was pleased with Manasseh's repentance, however Manasseh's earlier sins had so corrupted the nation that God vowed that he would punish the nation for their sins. When Manasseh died he was replaced by his son Amon. Amon was just as wicked and evil as Manasseh had been in his earlier days. Amon served for 2 years and was assassinated by officials in his government. Amon was then replaced by his son Josiah who was only 8 years old.

The writer of the book as he tells us about the life of Josiah, makes this important note about him, in verse 2: **² He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.** His life was pleasing to the Lord – he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He then says that Josiah did not turn aside to the right or the left. That's an interesting assessment of Josiah's life. The picture that is painted for us, is that he was on what we would call, the "straight and narrow". In his life he was following the pathway of obedience to God's commands. And he never wavered off the road. He didn't take any side roads of self-centered pleasure. His only desire was to serve the Lord with all of his heart, mind, soul and strength. His greatest joy came from serving the Lord.

As we consider the moral and spiritual condition of the nation of Judah when Josiah became king at the young age of 8 years old it is remarkable that the writer's assessment of him was so positive. The nation was deep in sin and disobedience. His father was a terrible king, leading the nation away from the Lord, and into idolatrous and despicable behavior. How did Josiah turn out so good. He didn't get it from his father. We must consider that Josiah had some strong spiritual mentors who taught him and led him into a pathway of righteousness and goodness. The impact of a godly mentor on the life of a young person cannot be understated. **Interlude:** Just a little interlude at this point in the story to ask the question – **Who are you mentoring? Who are you influencing for Good?**

We are not given any details about who may have been influencing Josiah. In the book of Kings, we are told that his mother's name was **Jedidah**. Mother's of kings are not often mentioned, so perhaps she is mentioned for a reason. Her name means "Beloved of God." Perhaps that is an indication that she influenced Josiah. Josiah, being such a young king would have been surrounded by advisors. Some of these advisors were priests. We don't know who, but it is likely that someone has taught Josiah the ways of the Lord.

Josiah's spiritual journey and development is outlined for us in his story of his life. There are three significant moments in his life that were mileposts or markers. The first is recorded for us in verse 3. **In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.** Josiah makes a decision to seek God. As he grows and learns his family history, he is impacted by the story of his ancestor David. Josiah saw the importance of David's connection with God. Perhaps as he read the Psalms of David, he was drawn to him. Perhaps as he learns about the grace that David experienced following his sin of adultery. Something clicked for Josiah and he made a decision to **seek God**. As we think about our own

spiritual journey, we can say that that is the first step to having a meaningful relationship with God. We decide to seek Him.

What does it mean to seek God? When we talk about seeking God it does not mean that God is lost – like our keys or wallet. John Piper defines “Seeking God” in this way:

Both the Old and New Testaments say it is a “setting of the mind and heart” on God. It is the conscious fixing or focusing of our mind’s attention and our heart’s affection on God. (website)

To seek God means that we make a conscious choice to set our mind and heart on our relationship with God. We make a decision that we will stay connected with Him, that we will live our lives being influenced by Him, by His will. The thought of God is never far from our minds. We are always conscious of Him and desire to please Him at all times, in every way.

So as we consider the case of Josiah, when he reached the age of 16, he made a conscious decision that he was going to pursue God. He was going to live his life under God’s authority. He would learn about God, pray to God, listen for the voice of God. We might compare Josiah’s decision to seek God to the decision that someone makes to be saved – to repent of their sin, to turn to God, to decide that they are going to live their life for Him for that moment on. Josiah decided that he was going to seek the God of his ancestor David. He was going to live his life for God.

Where are you in your relationship with God. I realize that many of you may have already made a decision, you have taken this first step on your spiritual journey to seek God. I hope that you can look back to that moment when you made that decision as a significant milepost on your journey with God. You can affirm that that decision was the best decision you ever made.

But perhaps there are some of you who have not taken that first step with God. You know about God, and you see other people who have taken that step. But you are still on the fence. I want to invite you today to make this decision that Josiah made – to seek God. I believe that your life will be forever changed for the good when you make that choice. If you would like to talk about what it would mean for you to seek God, or how you do that, I invite you to contact me. I would be glad to pray with you and offer you counsel as you begin your spiritual journey.