

Josiah: Restoring Worship

Preached: 1/31/2021; 4th Sunday after Epiphany – Germantown Church of God

Scripture

2 Chronicles 34:1- 11

Message

Restoring Worship

Because of the COVID pandemic, the way we worship has been disrupted recently. We are encouraged to avoid large gatherings of people. We are to maintain a safe distance from others who do not live in our household. Some churches have chosen to continue to meet for worship, with some guidelines. Others have chosen to temporarily suspend Sunday morning gatherings. As I talk to people who are a part of our Church community, they understand why we have made the decision to suspend services. But even though they understand, **people miss getting together for Worship, Prayer, fellowship and study.** I miss it as well. While we are disappointed that we cannot gather, **I am glad to know that people miss it.** As a pastor, I would not want to know that people do not care whether we can gather together or not.

We are continuing our series of studies based on the story of King Josiah of Judah. In today's lesson, we learn about a time when the people of God were not worshiping in their Temple as they had done in the past. It was not because of a global pandemic caused by a Virus spreading out of control. It was because their leaders through their neglect and spiritual hard heartedness had allowed the Temple to deteriorate and Worship to almost disappear from the scene. It was a sad situation. I am sure that there was a remnant of people who missed gathering in the temple for worship, but it appears that most of the population did not miss it at all. It became Josiah's mission to restore the worship of God in the Temple as it had been practiced in the past.

Josiah became the king of the nation of Judah when he was 8 years old. Pretty young to have such a great responsibility. The writer tells us about his development as a man, as king, but mostly as a believer in God. Those three are all interrelated. He tells us about 3 significant moments in his development. #1. When he was 16 years old, (his 8th year) he made a commitment to **“seek the God of his father David.”** #2. When he was 20 years old (his 12th year) **“he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols”** We have spent some time talking about what those decisions looked like in Josiah's life, and we have talked about what those decisions would look like in our lives as we follow his example. We don't just look at these stories from the Bible because they are nice stories and are entertaining like a TV program would be entertaining. We look at them to learn how we are to live our lives as we live in this world as the people of God. Now, today, we are going to look at the third decision Josiah made. #3. **“In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the ruler of the city, with Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the temple of the LORD his God.”** Josiah's 3rd decision was a decision to repair the temple and restore the Temple to its proper use and function.

I think that we can say that the 2nd and 3rd decisions that Josiah made, grew out of his 1st decision. He decided to seek God – the God of his father David. Josiah is compared to David. David was considered to be the greatest king of God's people. He loved and worshiped God and led the people to serve God. God made a commitment to David that someone from his line would be king over God's people forever. Josiah is a descendent of David. I believe that he is patterning his rule after that of David. He has obviously been taught about David and desires to be like him. He knows that if Judah was going to serve God, the land would have to be purged of idolatry, and the worship of God in the Temple would have to be restored. I don't believe that Josiah's decision to repair and restore the Temple was to preserve his legacy so that people would remember Him. I believe his desire was honorable. His decision to repair the temple then is significant.

Some background information about the Temple may help us know how significant this is. **What is the Temple? What is its purpose?** When the people of Israel left Egypt and traveled through the wilderness to the land God was giving to them, God instructed Moses to have the people construct a Tent or a Tabernacle. This would be a movable structure that would be set up and taken down as the people traveled through the wilderness. When they finally arrived in the land of Canaan that God was giving to them, they continued to use the Tabernacle for several hundred years. Finally when David became King over the people, David desired to construct a more permanent structure to replace the Tabernacle. God accepted David's offer to build a

Temple, but David would not be the one to build it. He gathered the materials and left instructions with his son Solomon to build the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Temple was intended to be a symbol of God's presence in the midst of his people. God declared that He does not dwell in houses or buildings. But the Temple would announce to the people of Israel and to all the world, that he was their God and they were His people. The Temple was the place where God's Name or presence would be manifest.

The Temple would serve several important functions. The Temple would be a place for Sacrifice. Sacrifices would be offered for the forgiveness of sins. Sacrifices would also be offered as "Fellowship offerings" where God's people would come into His presence to enjoy His presence. And sacrifices would be offered as "Thank Offerings" to worship and praise the LORD for His goodness and blessing. So the Temple would be a significant place, the Central place for the life of God's people. He was their God and they were His people. And the Temple would be the place where they would connect with Him.

However, as we have been learning in this study, we have learned that the people of Israel were not always faithful to God. And that unfaithfulness was seen in the Temple. 2 Chron. 29:6 says: ***'Our fathers were unfaithful and they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the Lord's dwelling place and turned their backs on Him.'*** The people preferred to worship the gods and idols of the nations that surrounded them rather than worshiping their God. Instead of using the temple to Worship and connect with their God, they transformed it into a place for worshiping idols. They constructed altars in the Temple for the purpose of worshiping other gods.

Essentially the people of God forgot their true identity. They no longer bore their identity as the people of God. God was no longer their God and they were no longer His people. God was no longer worshiped or revered. ***As they turned from God to serve other gods, the temple was ignored and fell into disrepair.*** It was no longer a place for the Worship of God.

When Josiah made the commitment to seek God, and to have Judah join him in seeking God, he recognized that the people must once again have a place where they could gather to offer sacrifices for their sins,, and to bring offerings to express their love for God and their thankfulness to Him for His goodness. He understood how important the Temple would be to the process of restoring the nation's identity as the people of God. Josiah was not just repairing a building, He was restoring the practice of worship to its rightful place. The places of worship of false gods and idols were tore down and destroyed and the place for the worship of God was restored. Money is collected, workers are hired and entrusted with the responsibility to do the work, and the work begins.

Next week we are going to look at the end of this story and how the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of Worship changed the King's life.

I want to have us **think about our own practice of Worship**. How is your practice of worship? I know that right now we are not gathering for public worship, but we can still engage in **private times of worship**. We can worship in our homes, as families, or as married couples. The practice of worship in Judah diminished when the people **forgot their true identity**. As a believer in Jesus, do you understand that you are a beloved child of God? Do you understand all that God has done for you? You are forgiven. You have been adopted into His family. He is your God. When we understand all that God has done for us, we will be moved to worship Him in a way that honors Him and that He alone deserves.

Have we allowed other things to distract us? Would we prefer to follow the ways of the people around us the way Judah did, rather than the ways of God.

Restoring your relationship with God it may involve several steps. Some people find it helpful to have a place where they can go and experience the presence of God in a way they do not experience it anywhere else. Not necessarily a Temple or a Church, but a place that inspires us to think about God. Restoring your relationship with God may require some other steps. Purging. Prioritizing. Scheduling. **You were created**

for the purpose of living in relationship with God, worshiping Him. How will you fulfill that purpose this week?

“God required a lifestyle of total allegiance from His people as a whole; service was meant to be expressed in everyday obedience.” David Peterson