

Trinity 24 (EP-3) (2018)

If a preacher had but one sermon, it would surely have to be about the faithfulness of God.

Put another way: **Our unfaithfulness is no match for His faithfulness!**

We see this over and over in Scripture, beginning in Genesis and going always to Malachi in the Old Testament, and, of course, reaching its great crescendo with the coming of Jesus Christ in the New.

And, if you think back over your own life, no doubt you will find evidence of it there as well.

This morning I want us consider this principle as it is illustrated for us in this morning's Old Testament reading.

This passage comes from the very last chapter of 2 Chronicles . . . which in the Hebrew arrangement of things is the last book of the Bible.

Here man's unfaithfulness had reached its tipping point. In verses 15 and 16 we read:

**“And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place.”**

In case you are wondering what that phrase, ‘**rising up betimes, and sending**’ means, it means ‘sending persistently’. God just kept sending His messengers. But, here was the people's response:

**“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.”**

Those who have children will undoubtedly understand what is being said here.

You encourage your little ones to do the right thing. You warn them concerning what will happen if they do the wrong thing. You give them multiple changes.

But, finally there comes the time when something more drastic is called for. In my day, it was to take off your belt.

Well, something like this was going on with God's people. Their loving Heavenly Father did everything possible to point them down the right path, yet they persisted in going down the wrong one.

Instead, of responding to His overtures of love, mercy and grace, they rebelled.

Instead of worshipping Him with their whole heart, they turned and served the gods of the nations around them.

Instead of seeking His help when facing danger from their enemies, they went down to Egypt looking for help.

And then, came the tipping point.

It wasn't as if they had not been warned. No, as far back as Moses, they had been told what would happen if they broke the terms of the covenant God had established with them at Sinai. It was exile.

The great blessing was the land. The great curse was absence from that land.

What did they do? Which way did they go? What choice did they make?

Well, the writer of 2 Chronicles has told us:

**They mocked God's messengers. They despised God's words. They misused God's prophets.**

So, they got the curse.

As today passage moves along, things appear to be about as bad as they could get:

--The Davidic kingship seemingly was at an end. Zedekiah was the last in a line of failures.

--The majority of the population, hauled off to Babylon.

--Jerusalem including its great Temple, destroyed.

But, had their unfaithfulness won the day?

No, the passage takes a surprising turn. Instead ending on a note of gloom, it ends on a note of hope.

After 70 years in Babylonia, God raised up a Persian king named Cyrus who issued a decree allowing those who wished to go home. More than that, this same king ordered the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

It's almost too good to be true. What had happened? I will tell you:

God's faithfulness had trumped man's unfaithfulness.

In 2 Timothy 2:13, we find these words (I am quoting here from the Revised Standard Version):

**“If we are faithless, he [God] remains faithful.”**

If you look back in your own life, I think you will find many examples of God doing just this . . . keeping His eye on you, even when you have taken yours off Him.

Why not take on this exercise of looking back at God's faithfulness during this coming week?

As you do, ponder the familiar words of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

**“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”**

Can you find examples of this sort of care in your life?

I believe you can.

And, as you remember God's past acts of faithfulness, give thanks for every one.

Moreover, I think we can expand this thought of God's faithfulness to include not just His blessings to us personally, but His blessings to this nation in which you and I live.

This past week I read several accounts of the D-day landing during the Second World War.

Almost without exception, those who were telling the story said that the enemy had all the advantages and that what happened that day was nothing short of a miracle.

Yes, many lives were lost, but not nearly as many as those who were planning this operation had feared.

Many credit its success to the hand of Providence. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the operation, was one of these.

In an article published in the June 16, 1952, issue of Time magazine, the future President was quoted saying:

**'If there was nothing else in my life to prove the existence of an almighty God, the events of the next 24 hours did it'.**

The predicted weather conditions were such that the enemy was not suspecting an invasion. Indeed, the German commander, Field Marshal Rommel, was so confident that he travelled back to Germany for his wife's birthday.

But the weather did break allowing the Allies to go forward, taking the enemy by surprise.

What should not be missed in the telling of this story is what was going on just prior to this invasion. At few times in history have so many people prayed.

The night before President Roosevelt call the nation to prayer, offering up words which will forever be remembered:

**“Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavour, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity. Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith . . .”**

On the other side of the Atlanta, King George VI had done something similar. Chaplains had been instructed to pray with the troops and to instruct them to put their trust in God.

And, we know the outcome. God was faithful. He honoured those cries for help. Words of Jeremiah 29, verses 13 and 14 come to mind:

**“Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord.”**

This week has been a tumultuous one in our state and in many other places in the nation. Confusion and discord have erupted as a result of Tuesday’s election.

What will be the outcome?

I don’t know. Yet, this one thing I do know: God’s faithfulness -- the faithfulness that trumps all our unfaithfulness -- has not come to an end.

God’s offer and promise found in 2 Chronicles 7:14 still stands, and with these words I close:

**If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.**

So, let us act and pray.