

## Look and Listen Part 7

Last Sunday we talked about Peter walking on water but fear blinded him, causing him to take his eyes off of Jesus. We said that we stop looking to and listening to Jesus when we're blinded by wind and waves. Our attention shifts to what frightens us rather than remaining focused on the One who casts out fear and enables us to walk through every storm. I want to share another story with you, this one from the Old Testament, that gives us some insight on the importance of looking to and listening to the Lord when trouble comes.

Turn to 2 Chronicles 20. It's the story of King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. Remember at this time the nation was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Jehoshaphat inherited the throne after his father Asa died. He ruled from around 873 to 848 BCE, about three hundred years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Jehoshaphat was one of the good kings who served the Lord and did what was right. You can read about this in 2 Chronicles 17-19. He had a history of seeking the Lord (2 Chron. 18:4). But eventually, trouble came in the form of an enemy invasion. **“After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, ‘A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in En Gedi.’”**

A vast army is coming. That doesn't sound good. It's probably the way people in Ukraine are feeling as Russian troops amass at their border. The bible says **“Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” 2 Chronicles 20:3** The king was frightened, but He knew what to do. NIV says “He resolved to inquire of the Lord.” He knew when trouble comes, when enemies are coming at you, look to the Lord, seek Him. I've been saying each week to look to and listen to Jesus, but you may have to “set yourself” to look to the Lord. This isn't a glance in his direction, a tip of the hat towards him as you rush out the door each morning. This is setting yourself to seek the Lord, praying and crying out, focusing on him, looking to him until you see him and listening until you hear from him. “Resolve to inquire of the Lord.” Decide you are going to look to the lord and then do it! Here are a few lessons we can learn from King Jehoshaphat.

First of all, **Decide where you'll look and to whom you'll listen.** Who or what has your attention? Who has your ear? Who are you listening to? Peers? Celebrities? Talk radio? Facebook experts? Friends that want you to fall down the same hole they fell into? Voices that

fill your mind with doubt and fear? Conspiracy theorists? Who is your source? I appreciate that Jehoshaphat didn't look to neighboring kings, other nations, he wasn't sending out messages to allies, he didn't even call in his advisors, instead he called the people together and said "we're going to look to the Lord. He is our source. He is the one we need to be listening to and there is no one else to turn to in a time of trouble." Decide who you'll listen to and where you're going to look. I'll tell you right now, I'm looking to and listening to Jesus! There is no other source to trust! Who else can you look to in this world? Look to him, listen to him and obey his word!

The king gathered all the people together, young and old and began to pray. **"O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations and in Your hand is there not power and might so that no one is able to withstand You?" 2 Chronicles 20:6**

Here is the second lesson we learn: **We can rest in the sovereignty of God.** Jehoshaphat reminds himself and all the people of the God they serve. He's bigger than any problem they may face. However big a "vast army" is, the God we serve is bigger! He is the God in heaven and the God over this earth. He rules and reigns. We don't have to give in to fear when we remember who our Heavenly Father is. But he adds, "in your hand there is power and might so that no one is able to withstand you." That means God can do what pleases him and what if what pleases God doesn't please me? Listen... **We rest in the sovereignty of God because we know the character of God.** We've seen the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ remember? (2 Cor. 4:6) We know who he is. We know in whom we trust and we know he is doing what's right and best for us. When trouble comes, when enemies approach, we rest in his sovereignty and trust in his character. We can pray, "Lord, I bring my needs to you and ask you to show me your will, show me what I need to do, where we need to go, and ultimately I trust you and rest it all in you." It's what Jehoshaphat does as he prays. Rest in his sovereignty. But there is another lesson we learn. When trouble comes...

**Recall his faithful deeds.** In case anyone questions God's track record in terms of his sovereign acts, King Jehoshaphat reminds the people of God's faithfulness in his prayer. **"Are you not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? And they dwell in it and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name..." 2 Chronicles 20:7-8** He is reminding the people of their history, of His story with them. "God has dealt with our enemies before. God

drove our enemies out of the land and gave it to us and our descendants forever. We built a sanctuary and we're standing on the temple mount, declaring that what God has done, we believe he'll do again!" Israel constantly rehearsed God's faithfulness, his redemptive acts in history. That's what Passover is, that's what Hannukah is, the yearly retelling of God's deliverance and provision for his people. When the enemy is advancing toward you, look to the Lord and remind yourself of the faithfulness of God in your own history. Look what God has done in your life.

Jehoshaphat is looking to the Lord, he has declared the trustworthiness of their sovereign God, he has reminded the people of God's faithful deeds in the past and now he reminds them of God's promise. It's his next lesson for us when trouble comes: **Declare the promises of God.** Jehoshaphat reminds the people of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. It's the very spot where the king is standing. "Lord you said, this is your word, that **"If disaster comes upon us –sword, judgement, pestilence, or famine - we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save..." 2 Chronicles 20:9.** "Lord you said it, so we are honoring your word by looking to you and calling out to you. These enemies are coming to kill us and drive us off of the land you gave us, but we trust you to help us because of your promise. Here we are, looking to you and now we rest in your promise and in your sovereign plans."

And then Jehoshaphat says this. **"O our God, we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." 2 Chronicles 20:12** I think King Jehoshaphat sums it up for me in this verse. When trouble comes... **After all is said and done...keep looking to Jesus!** We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you. We've done all we know to do, but it's not enough. We had a plan, but then we realized just how big a "vast army" is and realized, yeah, we got nothing. We're powerless, but we are looking to you. Can you relate to Jehoshaphat? I can! Which way should we go? Which road do I take? Which voice do I follow? Which source do I believe? What direction do you want for the church? How do we impact the community and win the lost and disciple people? Lord, we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you. When you don't know, look to Jesus. When you are powerless, look to Jesus. When you are desperate, look and listen to Jesus.

Jehoshaphat has set his heart to seek the Lord. He is looking and listening and the Lord speaks. The Spirit of the Lord came upon a fellow named Jahaziel, a Levite and apparently a member of the choir, a descendant of Asaph the choir director. This is what the Lord says, **"Do**

**not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them...You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow and the Lord will be with you." 2 Chronicles 20:15-17**

What a word! What a promise! What provision! The battle belongs to the Lord. He's going to fight for us. Just think, if Jehoshaphat hadn't decided to set himself to seek the Lord, if he hadn't been looking and listening, he wouldn't have heard this word from the Lord. He could have missed it. He could have been pre-occupied with war plans, too busy to look to Jesus, too busy to listen for a word from God. It's okay to make plans, but keep looking to Jesus, keep listening for a word from the Lord, keep trusting him. Don't miss it when he speaks!

The Lord told them they wouldn't even have to fight. Just position yourself where you can see the Lord's salvation, his provision. Once again, they were to position themselves to see, just as they had positioned themselves in seeking the Lord, in looking and listening. Get where you can see and hear, look and listen. (Have I said that enough?) It's part of why we gather here, in worship and study. We are positioning ourselves to look and listen, to see and hear.

In response to the word of the Lord, Jehoshaphat and the people bowed down with their faces to the ground and worshipped the Lord and while they were worshiping, the choir, the singers, just spontaneously rose up and began to sing in praise and worship. Here is another lesson: **Worship is always the right response in a time of trouble.** It's why Paul and Silas were singing at midnight after being beaten and their arms and legs in stocks. It's why David could sing and worship while running for his life. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" Look and listen and then sing and rejoice! Worship is positioning yourself to see God and to see his victory. God is worthy of praise and worship, regardless of circumstances. God is good, not because of what he does, but because of who he is. It's his nature. Worship him because of who he is and praise him for all he's done. We should praise him in a time of trouble knowing that as we do, we are lifted, our hearts are encouraged, our perspective changes, our faith is built up when we worship and praise the Lord. Our focus turns to the Lord, his greatness, his mercy, and away from the enemy, from the vast army, from the storm.

Jehoshaphat told the people as they headed out to confront the enemy, **"Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld...[and] after consulting the people, Jehoshaphat**

**appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army saying, ‘Give thanks to the Lord for his mercy endures forever.’ As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah and they were defeated.” 2 Chronicles 20:20-22**

There is something about singing and praising the Lord and worshiping and declaring his goodness that confounds the enemy, especially when trouble is coming at us. If you missed the night of worship and prayer Wednesday night, I’m sorry. But I believe the Lord set up ambushes and defeated some enemy tactics Wednesday night as people prayed together and looked to the Lord! Have faith in the Lord and you will be upheld the king said. Keep trusting and looking to Jesus. Keep believing. Don’t turn away in fear, instead, “Give thanks to the Lord for his mercy endures forever!” Give thanks to the Lord because he fights the battle. Give thanks to the Lord for he provides, he delivers, he rescues in a time of trouble.

The Lord brought victory, they plundered the camp of the enemy and God gave them peace. They started in fear, troubled because a vast army was coming against them, but instead of giving in to the fear, they looked to the Lord. **“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.”** I don’t know what you are facing, if there is trouble or some kind of enemy threatening you, but I know what to do: look to the Lord and listen to him. Set yourself to seek the Lord. That’s what Jehoshaphat and all the people of Judah did and the Lord brought deliverance. Let’s look to him. Let’s call upon him. Let’s rest in his sovereignty, let’s recall his faithfulness, let’s trust in his promises, let’s worship him and give him praise, regardless of the circumstance. Give thanks to the Lord for his mercy endures forever!

Some of you are saying exactly what the king said. “We don’t know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” If you are facing an enemy, a battle, a decision and you don’t know what to do, how about joining me here at the altar and let’s call upon the Lord together. Let’s position ourselves to see and hear from the Lord. Let’s look to and listen to him! “Have faith in the Lord” the king said “and you will be upheld.” Let’s give him thanks for his mercy endures forever and I believe his help is on the way.