

Sunday 16th August 2020

“God is in Control”



Even if we get nothing else from today's address I pray you may take home this thought.

“Even when things seem to be at their darkest and bleakest we can trust that God is always in control and always at work unfolding his will in this world.”

Consider what the Lord says in Jeremiah 29:11.

“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.”

Let's Pray.

When trouble and hardships disrupt our lives we sometimes have the tendency to question God's purpose or his sovereign rule over his people.

Of course Satan is always tempting us to doubt God's love for us, isn't he?

Perhaps you have been tempted to believe that 2020 is such a time as that.

Perhaps recent events in your own life and in our world may have caused you to doubt that God's purposes for you are always good and that God loves you with an everlasting love.

Of course if we judge God's purpose in the world by what we see going on around us these thoughts will crop up in our minds.

Nevertheless the scripture wants us to trust that God is at work in our lives even when it doesn't appear that way. Remember, God's ways are not always our ways. He sees the bigger picture. Faith trusts that God knows what he is doing.

The evil that opposes our God may seem overwhelming to us at times. The truth is, evil as but a fallen leaf in the face of a cyclone compared to God's will.

Evil is like a single solitary mouse crawling along the rafter in a mighty Cathedral filled to capacity with God and God's people and their praise of him. If you read Revelation chapter four and five you will soon come to realise that God is in total control and all that happens unfolds according to his will.

Evil cannot thwart the plans and purposes of God and his purposes and plans for his children are always for their ultimate good and His eternal glory.

Friends God's name is still being honoured. His kingdom rule and reign is still unfolding as it should. His word continues to achieve all that he sends it out to do.

As one song says, "What a mighty God we serve."

There are numerous stories where God seemed to have abandoned the ship

Take for example the story of Joseph, in today's Old Testament reading; sold by his brothers into slavery. Even in that terrible event God was providing for the future of his chosen people. God used the evil actions of Joseph's brothers to bring about untold blessing.

As the prime minister of Egypt, Joseph himself recognised that fact when he said to them (as recorded in Genesis 50:20)

"20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Joseph was betrayed, deserted, exposed to temptation, punished when he did the right thing, endured years in prison and forgotten by those he helped along the way.

If ever there was a candidate for doubting God it was Joseph. But he held on to the promises of the promise keeping God who is always at work in every situation in the lives of those who love him.

Max Lucado writes, "Joseph told his brothers, using a Hebrew verb that traces its meaning to "weave" or "plait."

"You wove evil," he was saying, "but God reweave it together for good."

God is the Master Weaver. He stretches the yarn and intertwines the colours, the ragged twine with the velvet strings, the pains with the pleasures. Nothing escapes His reach. Every king, despot, weather pattern, and molecule, all are at His command. He passes the weavers shuttle back and forth across the generations, and as He does, a design emerges.

Satan may weave; God reweaves.

Think about the prophet Elijah after his encounter with the prophets of Baal; fleeing into the desert of Sinai with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in hot pursuit.

Elijah had experienced the hand of God strong to save on numerous occasions. He knew from personal experience something of the awesome power and sovereignty of Yahweh.

In his life-time Elijah was confronted by great evil in a nation that put “no religion” on the census form. Increasingly it seemed that those who were against God seemed to be shaping the future.

It seemed like God’s people were retreating in disarray. It seemed like God was out to lunch. In the midst of his doubts and fears God met Elijah at the point of his greatest need.

Elijah finds himself in a cave, literally and spiritually. Fear can drive us into caves too. And God appears to Elijah. We read about it in 1 Kings 19:9-18. Take a moment to read it.

And God did all he said he would do.

God appeared to Elijah not in dramatic fashion but in the stillness. That’s still a great place to meet God.

God doesn’t need to make a big show of things. He’s relaxed. He’s in total control of every situation. His purpose is not hindered by any opposition. He just gets on with the job.

Our promise keeping God is always in the driver’s seat.

Then there are the disciples in last week’s gospel reading; full of fear as the storm rages and Jesus comes to them walking on the water.

They think he is a Ghost. To superstitious sailors the sight of a ghost was a warning of impending death.

Then in what seems to be their darkest hour their fear suddenly turns to hope as they realise that Jesus has come to their rescue. “Do not fear”, Jesus says, “I AM”. The great I AM who spoke to Moses from the burning bush is the one we know as He who was, is and is to come.

What he said to those disciples he says to you.

When Satan, the world and the sinful nature tell us that God has lost the plot, ignore them.

Get your eyes off the storms of life. You are a child of the Lord God Almighty.

He has a plan and a purpose for you and it will not be thwarted by God’s enemies.

Seen without the eyes of faith Jesus death at first seemed like a defeat but his resurrection proves that what appears to be happening is not always what is really taking place.

“Lutheran Theologian Lori-Anne Crawford writes, “God shows up in surprising ways, resulting in our changing perceptions of God *and our embrace of His reality in this world.* God’s loving and faithful presence helps us reframe our perceptions of hardship and silent isolation. For in our seasons of wilderness, storms, and silence, God comes to us and graciously gives us faith and courage to go on, reminding us that God is indeed with us.

Friends we can trust that God is always up to something good, even if at first it may seem otherwise. Yes friends, God is with us in the wilderness, in the storm and in the silence, and whenever we attempt the impossible; like walking on water.

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