

Introduction

One of my favorite books is C.S. Lewis' novel *That Hideous Strength*. The main drama of the book focuses on a governmental conspiracy to take over the world by harnessing demonic power. The good guys stand in opposition to this plot but they are awaiting for orders from the good angels about what they should do. They are all living in the same house together, growing vegetables and tending to various livestock and they don't "look" like they are on a mission to save the world.

Indeed, this is what one of the members of their company says at one time. He complains that they aren't doing anything to stop the threat. They are simply sitting around while the enemy grows stronger and stronger.

While this isn't the main theme of the book, it is one that touches on some of what is before us this morning. When we read the Bible it is clear that God's mission is to save the world. And, He has called His people to be involved in this mission. But God doesn't always give us direct instructions. Often times we are called upon to use wisdom to figure out what the priorities are and what the proper way forward is. This can be difficult, but it is the way God has designed things so that we might grow in wisdom as His people.

These themes will guide the way through this morning's passage. I would like to draw three points from our passage:

1. God's people are called to urgently pursue God's mission (vv. 29-33)
2. God's people should know what God prioritizes (vv. 34-41)
3. God's people should thank God in their success (vv. 42-51)

Urgently Pursue God's Mission (vv. 29-33)

Our first section shows that Eliezar is a man on mission. This is clear from verse 33 where he won't eat until he has said what he needs to say. But more on that soon.

In verse 29 we are introduced to the character of Laban. Laban will be familiar to most readers of the Bible from the story of Jacob. In Jacob's story, Laban is a crafty man who deceives Jacob into his service for many years.

Here we begin to see some of Laban's character. Laban runs out to meet Eliezar by the well. Verse 30 states that "***As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and heard the words of Rebekah his sister, he went to the man.***" This verse gives us reason to suspect that Laban is chiefly interested in the material prosperity that could come to his own family if his sister was to marry Isaac.

Eliezar has arrived with 10 camels, richly endowed with jewelry. And he has already given an impressive amount of gold to Rebekah. Laban is keen to welcome Eliezar into their home.

In verses 32-33 Eliezar comes to the house and is welcomed with food set before him to eat. But Eliezar responds by saying, "I will not eat until I have said what I have to say."

Eliezar is a servant on a mission. And while he is on the mission he is determined to stay focused on the mission. He refuses to be distracted by the delicacies of Laban's house. Eliezar is wise in the way of [Proverbs 23](#). In [Proverbs 23](#), the father instructs his son, "*When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite.*" Distractions can be just as detrimental to a mission as anything else. A man on mission refuses to be distracted.

We see this in the life of Jesus in [Matthew 26](#) when Jesus institutes the Lord's supper. Jesus is about to go to the cross to accomplish the mission before Him. He says, "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." There is a focused necessary to accomplish a mission. Such focus is exemplified for us in the gospels and with Eliezar.

You are a servant in God's house as Eliezar was in Abraham's house. Each of you have a mission that God has placed before you. God has called His people to take dominion in the world. Whether you are changing diapers, building a house, or working on a computer, God calls you to take dominion. And in our day and age, one of Satan's best ways to tempt you away from the mission before you is through distraction.

Distractions aren't always bad things. Just like the food at Laban's table wasn't a bad thing. It isn't sinful for Eliezar to enjoy a meal with the family. But Eliezar knew what his mission was and he wasn't going to be distracted from it.

Take the same line as Eliezar. Know the mission before you and be watchful of distractions from *that* mission. Which leads us to my next point: Know what God prioritizes.

Know What God Prioritizes (vv. 34-41)

In verses 34-48 Eliezar retells much of what we have already read in the sermon text from last week.

Whenever something is retold in the Bible, you should pay particular attention to any differences in the retelling. You can find the reason why the story is being retold in the differences. When I was teaching the older kids Bible on Thursday morning I brought up the fact that the books of Kings and Chronicles cover much of the same ground in Israel's history. So why two accounts? Kings is all about why Israel went into exile (idolatry). Chronicles is all about why God has been willing to bring His people back from exile. Chronicles is much more hopeful.

Eliezar emphasizes three things in his retelling of the story. The third one drives at our point (knowing what God prioritizes).

The first thing is that Eliezar emphasizes Abraham's material prosperity. Eliezar is trying to convince Laban that it would be good for Rebekah to marry to Isaac. This is a little like a man going to ask a father for his daughter's hand in marriage. One of the inevitable questions in the process is, "How will you be able to provide for my daughter." This isn't the exact same situation but Eliezar is making it clear; Abraham is wealthy and Isaac is set up to inherit everything. Eliezar is showing the Isaac is a very eligible bachelor.

Eliezar also needs to show that the match is suitable. Isaac and Rebekah are not a part of the same generation. Isaac would be apart of Rebekah's parents' generation because he is Abraham's son, not his grandson. But Eliezar shows that Isaac was the son of Abraham's old age. While he and Rebekah may not be in the same "generation" they are close in age to be a suitable match for one another.

The second thing that Eliezar emphasizes in this retelling is the the connections with Abraham's father's house. When we read of Eliezar's oath to Abraham, these details aren't included. What are we to make of this? Where these details simply left out the first time? Is Eliezar lying here?

I believe the best way to understand this is to see that Eliezar is highlighting the suitability of the match. The fact that Rebekah is the one who walks out with the jar of water, and she *just so happens* to have this connection to Abraham is a big deal in that world. Within the context of the story, it is almost as if this is "meant to be". Eliezar is really selling this to Laban.

Which drives to **the last thing** Eliezar emphasizes in his retelling. In verse 39 Eliezar retells of his doubts about whether the girl will come back with him, "Perhaps the woman will not follow me." But in verse 40 we hear Abraham's response, "The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and prosper your way."

The angel of the LORD shows up in the Bible at very momentous occasions. The Angel of the LORD goes before Jacob in his mission. The Angel of the goes before the people when they were saved from Egypt. For the Angel of the LORD to go before Eliezar to prosper his way, should show us the importance of this event. Eliezar knew what his priorities were; find a suitable bride.

In accounts like these, we have indicators showing us it's importance (The Angel of the LORD). But what about in our own missions? How do we know God's priorities?

We need to look to God's word to know what needs to be prioritized. First there is your own obedience and submission to Christ. You are called to master yourself under Christ as your primary mission. This doesn't mean you have no other duties until this one has been completed but it does mean that you can

never lose sight of this. Your own walk before the Lord in submission to His word is your primary responsibility.

Second there are the relationships that God has put you in providentially. Children, a big mission of yours is to honor and obey your parents. Likewise, parents, a central mission in your life is to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

However, as you move out from these priorities there is less clarity. The call to dominion goes beyond having dominion over ourselves and our homes. Humanity is called to take dominion of the world beyond as well. In this you have freedom, but that freedom is constrained by your prior duties and this freedom is to be exercised in wisdom.

What do I mean? You have freedom to exercise dominion in the world insofar as your other duties are attended to. There is the perennial example of the successful man who is dominating in their while his family suffers. That isn't okay. That said, you should be seeking to attend to your duties while also pursuing God's calling in the world.

Prioritize what God has prioritized, and then seek to act in wisdom as you use your freedom in service of the king!

Thank God in Success (vv. 42-51)

The retelling of the story, and our passage concludes, with Eliezar telling of how his prayer was answer. He prays that God would prosper his way and Rebekah appears and does all that Eliezar has asked of God.

In verses 48 & in verse 52 (which I would like to included here at the end), Eliezar bows his head in worship and thanksgiving to God for his success.

In verses 50 & 51 Laban and Bethuel respond to Eliezar by confessing that all that has happened has clearly come about from the LORD and that they ascent to the marriage of Rebekah & Isaac.

In the same manner as before, Eliezar bows himself to the earth before the LORD in worship and thanksgiving.

Conclusion

Once again Eliezar stands in as example for us. Eliezar's posture to God's blessing is worship and thanksgiving.

Throughout the Bible God's people are called to give thanks to God. What's more, we are not simply called to give thanks to God when he prospers our way (like He did for Eliezar). We are called to give thanks to God in all things.

Offering thanks to God for everything in your life will change your perspective. If you're having a difficult time with your spouse, or your child, or your job, take a moment and offer thanks to God. Don't simply ask for God to change the circumstances (you *can* do that too!). But make sure you are thanking God in all things!

The way we are able to do this is by always remembering what God has done for us in Christ. Because Jesus died and rose again, God has forgiven your sins and delivered you from the snare of death. God has dealt with the greatest threats. You can trust that God will walk with you through all of your troubles (even when they aren't resolved the way you want them to be). Because of this, you can give thanks!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **AMEN!**