

Good morning.

It's good to see everyone this morning.

I'm not Jerry Connor.

We want to remember Jerry in our prayers.

His dad is ill.

I believe he was put in hospice, and so that's where Jerry is.

And so we want to remember him, and that's where he needs to be, is with his father.

It's always a privilege to be able to stand here before you all.

It's very humbling for me and I thank you for the opportunity.

We're going to look at an Old Testament story today.

It's one of my favorites and has become more one of my favorites as I've gotten older and as we go through things as a church.

I believe that these

These stories in the Old Testament, the Bible is full of people, full of people of faith, full of stories, full of circumstances, full of situations that seem insurmountable.

And through all those stories, I believe we can learn.

We learn how to live our Christian life.

We learn how to grow in our faith.

And they can be used for that.

Now, I'm not a prophet or anything like that, but I believe that there's things that we can read and apply in our lives.

You know, as a chaplain, I kidded, and I really wasn't kidding, but a lot of what I learned as a chaplain was by watching some of those who, that's not the way I want to do it.

But these stories and this one today about King Jehoshaphat,

he was one of the good kings.

He walked in the way of the Lord and his father did, Asa.

And so it's good to look at that and to, we're going to look at that and see.

And also, I'm not going to hit every point.

We'd be here till tomorrow and we still may be, you know, if I get going here.

But we can learn from this and the situation we're in our church right now and the circumstances and just how we are right now, I think this will speak to us.

And I won't hit all the points, but what I want you to do is learn to look at and let the Lord speak about the scripture that we read and talk about and connect the dots in your life or in our life as a church.

One quick note, happy Mother's Day.

I'm thankful for Margaret who led us to this church, my mother.

I better stop there.

If you would turn to 2nd Chronicles.

2nd Chronicles chapter 20.

I'm going to start with verse 1 and I'm going to read through and we're going to start and stop.

I'll try not to be too, get lost here in the scripture, but

says the Moabites, the Ammonites, together with some of the Menunites, are from Mount Seir, and some of those folks mixed in were Edomites.

So there was just a bunch of folks east of the Jordan River that was always attacking Judah, the southern kingdom.

Judah and Jerusalem.

Now, the interesting thing about this is keep in mind that they were relatives, distant relatives.

All of them were in that area.

The Moabites and the Ammonites came from the same father.

Anybody know who that was?

Lot.

So there was some difficulty there in the families.

But also Esau, the Edomites.

So they were related.

And I know in our Sunday school, John's going over the different minor prophets, and one of them is talking about the Edomites and how they mistreated Judah.

But they were family, and that's why God had an issue with that.

And so, right, this is what's happening.

That sets the stage.

And it says that they came to fight against Jehoshaphat.

People came and told you, Jehoshaphat, a vast multitude from beyond the Dead Sea.

They were east of the Jordan River.

From Edom, they have come to fight against you.

Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he resolved to seek the Lord.

Now, let me stop and back up.

Remember I said, listen for those points.

that you can apply in your life or in life, our church.

Listen to those growing points that helps us in our faith.

Because I just read some.

I'm going to read them again.

Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he resolved to seek the Lord.

So he proclaimed a fast for all of Judah who gathered to seek the Lord.

They came, they even came from all of the cities of Judah to seek him.

What theme do you hear in that?

that they seek the Lord.

Seek the Lord in a time of need.

Seek the Lord in a time of trouble.

Seek the Lord in a dark valley.

Seek the Lord whenever there's situations that happen in our life.

And we all have situations that happen in our life.

We've all faced uncertain times.

And I bet there's times when you've thought, well, what do I do now?

And I'll speak for myself.

I do several things.

I go, what do I do now?

I don't know what to do.

And then I start doing something.

That's never a good idea for me.

I'm the greatest threat to my own well-being.

And so it's good the Lord watches out for me in spite of myself.

But you see, that's what a situation, a dark valley will do in your life.

It'll scatter you.

And I always believed that circumstances don't make or break us.

They reveal us.

And I always liked that.

because it shows where we are.

And where it should show where we are is growing in our faith.

We'll arrive one day on the other side of eternity.

But until then, we are growing in our faith and we'll continue to grow.

So Jehoshaphat was faced with an extremely difficult and in a situation that he could not resolve.

A hopeless situation.

A vast multitude was coming to battle and conquer Judah and Jerusalem.

Think back over the times in your life.

What are some of those times when a horde of whatever is standing there at your door and causing problems?

Things in your life, a situation, a circumstance that you're not ready for.

Now, after being warned, Jehoshaphat became afraid.

I want to just take just a moment.

I was a hospital chaplain in about 6 different hospitals.

And one of the things that I saw is that people first would have an initial reaction.

You know, if you get hit in the stomach, you get gut punched, you're going to have an initial reaction.

And usually that initial reaction is, you know, catch your breath.

And people would feel bad about having some of those reactions.

Their fear, jealousy.

I mean, you name every one of the feelings and emotions.

People have had those, and I would talk with them.

And one of the things I believe, now this is Mike, that it's human to have an initial reaction.

Give yourself permission to have that initial reaction.

Jehoshaphat

followed the Lord.

And he had the initial reaction when he heard about the mass of the army coming to him.

He was afraid.

The key is don't stay there.

That's the key is it's human to have your initial reaction, but don't stay there.

As we grow in our faith, that time of that initial reaction, I think, should start shrinking just a little bit.

Give yourself permission to be human.

Those times are going to come.

And I think probably all of us can think back times that have already presented itself.

Jehoshaphat, the next thing he did was he resolved to seek the Lord.

He resolved to seek the Lord.

What does it mean to resolve?

Does it mean that he decided to seek the Lord?

Well, not really, but kind of.

What it means is even more than seeking, he was adamant about it.

That was the thing is that he was, he did it with a purpose.

He knew exactly what the next step was going to be and that was seek the Lord.

Now I know I'll speak for myself again.

I don't think this happened to anybody else, but you know there's been times when difficult things have come up and I sought a book or the internet

or something like that to find out what I need to do, because I was completely clueless as to what my next step would be.

And then I started learning as time went on, as we continued to, as I continued to, and we as our family, would go through difficult situations, and there were many of them.

And my faith started growing.

I started realizing that I have that initial gut punch, but don't stay there.

Move to the next step, and that next step is a logical step, and it's the best one we could make, and that is seek the Lord.

Seek the Lord's guidance.

I can remember a story or a situation that happened.

I was 22.

had gone in the Navy.

I was in E3.

A friend of mine and I, we said we were E-nothings.

And our daughter was born.

And she was given a 10% chance to live that night.

And I learned later as a hospital chaplain, 10% is 0.

There's no 10%.

It's 0.

And so I went home and I said, I don't know what to do.

And that was before kind of

Really went my way as a prodigal son, but I knew enough.

from growing up in a church home.

And I had enough faith where I had no place else to go except the Lord.

And so that night I got home and I left the lights off.

I just kind of sat down on the couch and said, Lord, whatever your will is.

And then the next day, they said, you better get a name for this girl or we're going to find one.

And the nurses, of course, when they say it, they mean it.

But you see,

instinctively, I turn to the Lord.

And I think that's what we can do.

As our faith grows, it becomes an instinct.

We go to the Lord.

Because we don't know what to do in a lot of these situations.

We're helpless.

We just absolutely don't know what the next step should be.

But as a Christian, we do know.

As a church, we've been gut punched.

As A congregation, what do we do now?

Well, it's

we've caught our breath, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about this.

There are things we can do while we wait.

That's kind of a hint at the end of the story here, but while we wait, there's things we can do.

Now, Jehoshaphat, he resolved to seek the Lord, and then he took action.

Now, it's interesting.

I'm going to be talking about

not doing anything and doing something.

The Bible's full of contradictions.

The lion and the lamb, servant and son of God.

You know, there's a lot of what seems to be like contradictions, but they're not really.

God knows what he's doing.

But what he did was he took action as a leader of the country, and he brought the country together, and people responded,

And he prayed.

He prayed.

He helped the country seek the Lord.

He stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem and prayed to God, the leader, the king.

And so he led the people in doing that.

Look at verse 5.

It said, then Jehoshaphat, he stood in the assembly of Judah in Jerusalem in the Lord's temple before a new courtyard.

And he said, I'm not going to read all of the prayer, but when you get home, read that prayer.

I'm going to read just parts of it.

Verse 7, are you not our God who drove out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and who gave it

to your descendants, forever to the descendants of Abraham, your friend.

Then down at 10, now here are the Ammonites, Moabites, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir.

You did not let Israel invade them when Israel came out of the land of Egypt.

But Israel turned away from them and did not destroy them.

Then down in verse 12, our God

Will you not judge them?

For we are powerless before this vast multitude.

We are powerless.

Few chapters before talked about Jehoshaphat having an army of a million or so soldiers.

And he was helpless in front of this army.

There was, if you can imagine how many more, or what this threat, what this fear could have looked like.

before this vast multitude that comes to fight against us.

We do not know what to do, but what does your scripture say?

We look to you.

I don't know what to do, Lord, but I look to you.

His prayer consisted of two main points.

It consisted of some humility, and it consisted of a confession of faith.

I'm either getting taller or this thing is sliding down.

So I don't think I'm getting taller.

I can't see.

Sorry about that.

His prayer was two main points.

He had humility and a confession of faith.

The two main, he says, we are your people.

In verse 7, you are our God.

We are your people.

and you gave this land to the descendants of Abraham.

When we came out of Egypt, you directed us, now listen to this, connect some dots here.

You directed us not to destroy these tribes who are now coming against us.

I kind of imagine, I'm not saying this is what happened, but I kind of imagine Jehoshaphat or the people of Judah saying,

We don't understand.

You told us to do one thing, God, and now it's, we got punched in the gut.

I don't understand, Lord.

How is this, you know, we are in your will, but now look what's happening.

This army is coming against us.

We are powerless, he says.

This is the humility.

He says we are powerless and we don't know what to do.

You know, there's times in our life when things happen like that, we don't know what to do.

Well, what are we doing when we decide that?

That's humility's recognizing that I'm human.

I don't have all the answers.

I don't have, I'm not powerful like God.

My wife will tell me that and reminds me of that.

You're not the boss here.

But you see, it takes humility to come to a point to say and to realize that we cannot take care of the circumstances.

I think that's an important point.

When I was counseling with people, you know, I realized that we were starting to get somewhere when they were able to acknowledge

the weaknesses in their life or the things that were difficult.

They always wanted me to fix the other person, but they had to come to a place in their own life where they realized, oh, see what they were doing is owning their issues.

And so this is what the humility of Jehoshaphat is that he is acknowledging the weakness that he has and also Judah as a country.

And then there's his confession of faith, which I think is great.

And this is a sign of where his faith is, his confession of faith and their dependence on God.

He says, but we look to you.

We look to you, God.

And so that's what his humility has brought.

See, it takes a humble person to seek God.

For so many years, that humility was not there for me.

I didn't think I needed to seek God.

That was my first mistake.

Now there were many others afterwards, but I didn't stop there.

But you see, it takes that humility to seek God.

Now God answered Jehoshaphat.

Look at verse 13.

All Judea was standing before the Lord with their infants and their wives and their children.

See, this was a community.

They didn't do it just individually.

They came together as a community, as a country, as families, as a people of God.

In the midst of the congregation, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel.

This was, and I'm going to skip all the names in the family lineage, he was a Levite and a prophet.

He was one of the Levites and a prophet.

And the Spirit filled him that day as they were standing there after Jehoshaphat's prayer.

And he said, this is what the Lord says, do not be afraid or discouraged.

Do not be afraid or be discouraged because of this vast multitude.

Why?

What does your scripture say?

Because the battle is not yours.

The battle is God's.

Now what does that do to your faith when you hear that?

How does that affect your faith?

When I first realized that and heard that and I kind of thought about that, I was in a situation one time when, I didn't know what to do and I did look to God, but I kind of was stymied there.

And then I learned this about and saw these verses about the battle is not yours.

You don't have to fight this battle.

The battle is God's.

What's it mean that the battle is God's?

What's that mean to you?

Think just for a moment.

Answer within.

I don't want any,

I won't ask anybody to raise a hand, but what does that mean to you and your faith?

As you're thinking, this is the God of the burning bush.

The bush was not consumed, was it?

This is the I am God, yesterday, today, and forever.

This is the God that parted the waters.

This is the Lord that is your shepherd.

Your shepherd, your own personal shepherd.

This is that God.

The battle is not yours, but God's.

Tomorrow go down against them.

Now there's still things that they are to do and God is directing them now through this Levite, this prophet.

Tomorrow go down against them.

You will see them coming up from the ascent of Ziz.

and you will find them at the end of the valley facing the wilderness of Jurail.

You do not have to fight this battle.

That's amazing.

That's just totally amazing to me.

You do not

not have to fight this battle.

Position yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.

He is with you, Judah and Jerusalem.

Do not be afraid or discouraged.

Tomorrow, go out to face them, for the Lord is with you.

We could talk on just those few verses four days, if there's so much in there.

Read that and reread that today or this week.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, the Levite and the prophet, and he delivered the message of encouragement and deliverance.

You do not have to be afraid or be discouraged because of the vast multitude.

For the battle is not yours, but it's God's.

Stand firm.

Now, wait a minute.

Stand firm.

But you see, they had to do something.

God said, go out and watch.

Go stand there and face it.

we have to face our consequences or face our situations that we are involved in, face those tough times, those dark valleys.

We still have to face them.

But I think a lot of times it's like this.

We face them to see what God does in those situations.

Not what Mike did in this situation.

Mike made a mess of it.

He said, stand firm.

See, God gives Jehoshaphat and Judah victory.

And what did the people do?

They worshiped God.

It says that they worshiped.

That's what they did.

So they were to stand still, but there's still things they were to do.

And they worshiped God.

They worshiped God.

The people worshiped God.

And then victory came through the worship.

rather than warfare.

Think about that.

As a church, right now, we are still waiting.

Okay, what's the next step?

What are we going to do?

Well, we wait.

We put our eyes on God.

But in the meantime, we worship God.

Let me talk about a couple applications of this, and then I want to read something

another set of scriptures that talk about waiting, because this is important.

You wait, but you do.

You wait, but there's things to do.

We wait, but we still have tasks to do.

At times, I believe that God allows us to be confronted by extremely difficult situations where we learn to trust Him.

This is a growing process.

Each time we go through situations like this and we look to God,
we see what he has done in our life.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

There's an idea, a thought that just, it's just been overwhelming me the last several years.

And that is, God is a covenant.

God.

What does that mean?

God made a covenant with Abraham.

God made a covenant with the people, with his people.

He made a covenant.

And what that means is He will keep His promises.

He will keep His promises.

Psalms 23, it talks about your loving and kindness, follow me all the days of my life.

The true interpretation is pursue me.

He is a covenant God that pursues us daily.

And when I was away from God, God was there and I knew it.

And He was pursuing me.

Leave me alone, God.

I got this.

And I didn't.

So we learned to grow through these difficult situations.

You know, growth comes through difficult situations.

You don't get stronger by not doing push-ups when you're in the military.

You have to hurt.

And sometimes it does hurt our faith growth.

But you know, nothing will be as glorious as heaven.

Nothing on earth can compare to that.

Jehoshaphat wasn't hesitant to acknowledge his insufficiencies.

Humility.

That's the first thing to seeking the Lord is acknowledging our shortcomings.

Jehoshaphat's initial reaction was fear, but then quickly sought the Lord's help.

So it's okay to have that instinctive feeling.

But don't stay there.

Learn to grow through that.

Stories like this in scripture are opportunities for us to learn how to respond when we encounter situations too difficult for us to handle.

Because they're there and they're going to continue to be there.

It's easy to fall back.

Trust me on this one.

I'm speaking for myself on this.

It's easy to fall back into self-reliance.

Oh, I can do this.

I don't need God.

I don't say that, but I act that.

Assuming we have all the answers and then be overwhelmed by the challenges we face.

Well, I can't believe what's happening here.

Well, it's because I didn't seek the Lord first in it.

Jahazel calls the people to not be afraid, to trust again, to trust again.

What do the Israelites keep doing?

They keep sinning.

Psalm 106, I call it the I forgot Psalms, says they forgot and sinned.

They forgot and sinned.

God did all of this and then they forgot.

So the Jezaharil calls the people to not be afraid and to trust again.

Don't forget what God did.

Trust again what God has done for you.

Trust again that God is in charge.

And so when you're in that next situation, you know, keep in mind, God's in charge.

He did not, it's not that he doesn't know what's going on here in this situation in your life.

He knows full well.

Be humbled and seek Him.

Remember that the battle, in closing here, the battle is not ours, but God.

It's God's battle.

Take comfort in that.

Be strong in that.

And you know, all through some of these books here along this area of the Old Testament, you're going to see the term, do not be afraid.

So there are times, evidently, we can

change that fear and not be afraid.

Wait a minute, I got this.

I see it as David, when he went before Goliath, had kind of that confidence.

I called it a holy confidence.

Now I had to think, well, he was afraid, but see, I don't know.

We don't see where it says he was.

So evidently there's a way that we cannot be afraid.

But if you are,

That's human.

That's okay.

Give yourself permission to be human.

But remember, the battle is not ours, but God's.

Seek God's help.

And then he says, the prophet said to wait and stand, wait there and stand and see.

See what God does.

I preached a sermon.

I'm sure everybody remembers all the words and the points and all this, but it was when Joshua was going to take the people across the Jordan.

What did they tell the Israelites?

You don't have to turn here.

I'll just read it to chapter 3 of Joshua.

It says, Joshua started early the next morning and left Acacia Grove with all the Israelites.

And they went as far as the Jordan, and they stayed there before crossing.

There was a pause.

Stand there.

They stayed there before crossing.

After three days, the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, when you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, carried by the Levitical priest, you must break camp

and follow it.

So while they are waiting, while they are standing still,

You keep your eyes on God.

That's what they were doing.

Watch God.

God will lead us on God's timing, not Mike's.

I want him to hurry up.

You know, I've written many a letter to, I was trying to get back in the military and they all got thrown away, I'm sure.

The Lord said, This is my battle.

You don't have to do all that.

While you are waiting, do this.

That is, keep your eyes on God.

So break camp and follow it.

But keep a distance of about 1,000 yards between yourself and the ark.

Don't go near it so that you can see the way to go.

For you, listen to this, for you haven't gone this way before.

We are going, starting

Now, we're going to continue to go as a congregation.

We're going where we've not been before.

What does tomorrow look like?

We don't know.

What does my life look like tomorrow?

I don't know.

We're going to all go where we've not been before.

And as a congregation, we're going to go where we've not been before.

We don't understand what happened.

We don't understand sometimes, you know, we had initial gut reactions.

But you know, we wait.

But in the meantime, they worshipped God at that pass where the enemy was coming.

They worshipped.

Joshua, and I love this, he says, so for you haven't traveled this way before.

Joshua told the people, here it is, here's the bottom line, one of them.

Joshua told the people, consecrate yourself.

See, he's telling them

to do something, as he's telling them to wait.

Because the Lord will do wonders.

He said, consecrate yourself because the Lord will do wonders among you tomorrow.

This is the Almighty God that we are waiting on, but we have our eyes on, and that we are trusting, that we are being humble and putting our life in his hands.

We are putting the life of our congregation in his hands.

And so wait.

Be patient.

I never thought I'd say that to anybody.

I'm the least patient.

But while we wait, we worship.

Now through the rest of this chapter in Chronicles, Second Chronicles, the next day they go to this mountain pass.

And the king told them, a certain group, start praising and singing to God.

And when they did that,

The battle had started and the enemy was defeated as they praised God.

I just can't imagine.

But that's the God we serve.

And so while we're waiting, consecrate yourself.

Prepare, prepare yourself.

We need to prepare ourselves as a congregation.

how do we consecrate ourselves?

Isn't that something God does?

No, consecration is what we do.

We keep our, how do we do that?

Well, we keep our eyes on God.

We praise God.

We pray, we read God's word, fasting, all the things we know.

Those are the things that we should be doing.

That's how we prepare or consecrate ourselves.

Consecrate is we are setting ourselves aside

for God, for something holy.

Don't be afraid or discouraged.

I believe that he will do wonders among us in your life, but also in the life of this church.

I believe that.

I believe that he will do wonders among us.

And this is important.

The battle is not ours.

It's His.

He will cause the growth.

He will cause the healing.

He will do that.

That's the God that we are to wait on.

So stand there and do.

Well, that's a contradiction.

I can get that one all mixed up.

But then it makes sense to me.