THE STORY CHAPTER 17

The Kingdoms’ Fall

February 5, 2017

Appearing on the Big Screen…

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years.

*Pg. 231; 2 Kings 21:1*

The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

*Pg. 241; 2 Chronicles 36: 15-16*

“Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.”

*Pg. 245; Ezekiel 36:23*

The Word of the Lord came to me saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

*Pg. 237; Jeremiah 1:4-5*

For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

*Ephesians 2:10*

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Oak Hills Church, Alamo Ranch Campus

February 5, 2017

**To view The Story Chapter 17 sermon video by Travis Eades,** [**CLICK HERE**](http://media.oakhillschurch.com/default.aspx?page=3679&item=569)**. This sermon by Randy Frazee was delivered at the Alamo Ranch campus of Oak Hills Church and was not filmed.**

**Suggested visuals referenced in this sermon are not provided.**

**Introduction**

True story: Sally Edwards is a highly esteemed third grade teacher at Jacksboro Elementary in a rural town in Texas. In an effort to prepare her students for the all-important TAKS test, she compiled an exam consisting of 20 questions, which she administered to her class. The exam purposely covered a broad array of topics. I call your attention to question #11, which simply read:

LIST, IN ANY ORDER, THE FOUR SEASONS:  
  
1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now, could you possibly imagine that 67% of the students gave the following answer?

1. DOVE SEASON 2. DEER SEASON 3. QUAIL SEASON 4. TURKEY SEASON

GOD BLESS THE KIDS OF RURAL TEXAS!!!

Oak Hills Church is seeking to prepare you for all important task of living your life according to God’s Word.

We think going through The Story together can really help you in your journey. So, hold up your copies of The Story or your Bible, all over the house as we have come to chapter 17.

We are almost through the Old Testament. We are getting closer and closer to the punch line – the arrival of Jesus – the way back to God forever- the point of the Story!

Turn to pg. 231 of *The Story* or 2 Kings 21.

**Setting**

We have learned that God has established the nation of Israel from scratch to reveal himself and his plan to provide the way to get all people back. To do this, he gave Israel the Law which instructs Israel on how life with God works - how to love God and love each other. People would see how life in community with God works and be drawn to God as the one true God who loves them as well.

But Israel didn’t keep up with their end of the bargain. For hundreds of years God patiently waited and warned them, gave them second and third chances, but they would not listen.

God would be justified in scrapping the plan and starting over with a new group of people, but he made an unconditional promise that the Messiah – the one who would provide the way back to God - would come from Israel. Specifically, the Messiah would come from David’s family, the tribe of Judah.

So, we have seen over the last few weeks that God whittles Israel down to a small remnant. The big, unstoppable, unified nation of Israel is divided in two – north and south. The northern kingdom of Israel, made up of 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel – but not Judah – is captured by the pagan nation of Assyria and deported and assimilated into their pagan culture in 722 B.C.

*Show map of Northern Kingdom’s deportation to Assyria.*

Only the southern kingdom of Judah remains. While Judah did have 5 good kings over a period of 350 years, most were as evil as the northern kings.

*Show map of divided kingdom.*

**Today’s Story**

Here’s a good example at the opening of chapter 17 of 2 Kings.

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years.”

*Pg. 231; 2 Kings 21:1*

Now, I really believe in giving young people opportunities to lead, but I think becoming king when you’re in junior high may be a bit much. I think there should be a rule that you can’t become king until you are done with acne. It certainly would have been a good idea in the case of Manasseh.

He didn’t just *“do evil in the eyes of the Lord,”* The Story tells us he did “**much** evil”, “**more** evil than the Amorites”, “shed **so much** innocent blood.”

But it wasn’t just Manasseh. Of the remaining 6 kings in Judah, only one – Josiah – is good. But, he challenges my theory. He was only 8 years old when he took the throne!

Like in the northern kingdom, God raised up prophets to give the kings and people his messages. It is time for Judah to hear God’s plan in light of their persistent evil.

A good summary is on page 241 of *The Story* or 2 Chronicles 36:15-16:

“The Lord, The God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.”

*Pg. 241; 2 Chronicles 36: 15-16*

If God continues to bless Judah while they are living so inconsistent with God’s Word and life, it will send a confusing message about who God is and how life in community with him works. God must discipline them. He does so with a distinct purpose in mind.

The prophet Ezekiel gives Judah this message:

“Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.”

*Pg. 245; Ezekiel 36:23*

What does God do? He raises up another pagan nation, the Babylonians, who will do to Judah what Assyria did to Israel. Over a period of 20 years they will capture them, burn down the city, destroy the beautiful temple that Solomon built, and deport the people to Babylon. This begins in 605 B.C. and is complete in 586 B.C.

*Show map of Judah’s deportation to Babylon.*

**Jeremiah**

These last couple weeks have not exactly been the kind of “pick you up” messages you need to inspire and encourage you, have they? But they are true and we need to give you the whole Word, not just the nice parts. Remember this, *Grace is not all that fantastic if you don’t need it.*

But there is a bright spot and something inspirational in this message that I think we can all take with us. It has to do with the prophet Jeremiah. Listen to his story. On page 237, or Jeremiah 1:4-5 we read,

The Word of the Lord came to me saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

*Pg. 237; Jeremiah 1:4-5*

God tells Jeremiah that before he was even born, he had an idea of what part Jeremiah would play in the unfolding of God’s Upper Story. That’s awesome! But the same is true for us today. Ephesians 2:10 of the New Testament reads,

For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

*Ephesians 2:10*

God is saying the same thing to everyone in this room who professes Jesus, the Messiah, as their Savior. This is not just for Jeremiah or Max or Randy, but everyone who belongs to Christ. He already has things in mind for you if you will align your life to God’s Upper Story. That’s overwhelming. Jeremiah felt the same way:

He said, *“I don’t know how to speak; I am too young.”*

You and I feel the same way, don’t we? – I’m too young, too old, not smart enough, can’t talk in front of people, not disciplined enough to be counted on…and on we go.

*The Story* tells us on page 237, or Jeremiah 1:9-10 that God reaches down and touches his mouth and tells Jeremiah that he will be with him every step of the way.

The same is true for New Testament believers. Ephesians 4 tells us that when Jesus returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit came down and touched us, gifted us, equipped us with everything we need to accomplish the assignment God has for us.

What was Jeremiah’s assignment? He was assigned the task of Weeping Prophet! God told him that he would give out God’s message, but the people would not listen. He is essentially telling him that he is going to fail in the world’s eyes. God tells Jeremiah that Judah needs to know that the devastation they are going to experience soon is not really from the Babylonians, but discipline from God’s hands.

There is a principle in this for us. In God’s employment contract he doesn’t ask us to be **successful** by the world’s standards, but **faithful**.

**Success is faithfulness to God, not good results.**

God told Jeremiah to stay behind in Jerusalem after Judah was exiled, to see the ruins and write down what he saw. Jeremiah is standing in a pile of rubble as the people are walking single file to the east to Babylon. There in the smoldering embers from the fire that destroyed the temple Solomon built for the Lord, he weeps bitterly and writes a book in the Old Testament called Lamentations, which means “to weep.”

But there is one bright spot. Amidst all the tough love and discipline, God tells Jeremiah to tell Judah that he is going to “bring you back home.”

Maybe you’ve heard these words before and didn’t know it came from Jeremiah’s words to the now exiled nation of Judah. Lamentations 3:21-23 –

Yet this I call to mind

and therefore I have hope:

Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,

for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;

great is thy faithfulness.

*Lamentations 3:21-23*

With God’s people there is never a strong, truthful bout of loving discipline without God’s grace following right behind it.

**Modern-Day Jeremiah Story**

Everyone who hears these words and has accepted Christ as the Messiah, should have a Jeremiah story. He is calling us, even before we were born, to align our lives to his Upper Story. We feel inadequate, but he promises to be with us and to give us everything we need to be faithful to our calling.

This week I was with a modern-day Jeremiah, Bob Buford:

* Extremely successful in cable television business
* Lost son in tragic downing accident
* Wanted to have different game plan for second half
* Michael Kami and “The Box”
* Peter Drucker – The New Assignment – help pastors of large churches unleash latent energy of congregation into the community.
* Banquet honoring 25 years of doing just that.

Here’s how it affects you. Back in 2007 I was struggling with my decision to come to San Antonio. Why? Over the last 20 years Bob has been one of my key mentors. I went to him and he sat with me for a whole day. When I left, the counsel was to come to San Antonio.

Here I am now 10 years later, partnering with Max and the team here to help you uncover your own Jeremiah story.

First step is to take you through *The Story* so you get the big idea, and I am so very encouraged by your tenacity and discipline.

Just remember, if you have to miss a weekend because it’s deer season or quail season, I get that – just make sure you don’t do it all the time and that you watch what you miss online. Deal?

*PRAY*