

SERMON: IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

2nd Kings 6:15-17

(15) And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? (16) And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. (17) And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Introduction

Science and spirituality both help us to see reality more clearly. They are partners in helping us see reality “realistically” so that we can deal with the challenges of life responsibly. I say again that faith and reason do not conflict; they complement each other. They are the two sides of the same coin. I will add, however, that the spiritual side is the most important. So, faith is heads and reason is tails. Things are not always as they appear and we constantly need to ask God to open our eyes further so we can have an adequate description of reality.

For centuries, people thought the earth was flat, but science taught us that it is round- or should I say spherical. For centuries, people thought the earth was the center of the universe and the sun revolved around the earth. Now, of course, we know the earth revolves around the sun. Neither the earth, nor the sun is the center of the universe. With the new telescopes riding on space vehicles, we now talk about a “metaverse” instead of a universe. Whether it is a metaverse or a universe, God created it. There was a big bang! God caused it!

God said, “Let there be,” and bang, there it was!

I say again, that appearances can be deceiving. Even in our daily lives, some things are not really what they look like. Whom you thought was a friend was really an enemy in disguise. Whom you thought loved you was really using you and when they used you up, they abandoned you. What you thought would give you immense joy really caused you unbearable pain and embarrassing disappointment. I say again, that appearances can be deceiving. This is why we have to be discerning and ever vigilant. According to Apostle Paul, Satan will camouflage himself as an angel of light and will deceive the very elect of God, if we do not ask God to give us clearer vision and then take a second look at things.

Now let's look on the positive side. There are people whom you thought would never come to your rescue, but they saved the day when you needed them. There are people whom you thought were not the most well-read or the most educated who provided you with invaluable information and wisdom. An event that you thought would be boring turned out to be very inspirational and educational.

The narrative of our text is a great example of how our initial perception can be faulty. The king of Syria, Ben-hadad, had his army to execute border raids against Israel. This was part of an ongoing war that had lasted for years. Ben-hadad was frustrated because every plan he made to attack was discovered by Joram, the king of Israel. Israel knew Syria's battle plans as soon as they were formulated and each raid ended in utter failure. He came to the conclusion that there was a spy in the camp. He thought, "There is a mole in the organization who is leaking the battle plans." He called his military leaders together and attempted to ferret out the traitor. There was no treasonous traitor. All of them were loyal to him.

One of the military leaders had enough courage to tell him the truth. The prophet Elisha had bugged Ben-hadad's court- even his bed room. It was divine espionage. The Lord revealed the battle plans to Elisha because of His love for Israel. Elisha was God's divine secret agent.

In his anger and embarrassment, Ben-hadad decided to eliminate Elisha. He sent out spies to locate Elisha and they found him in the city of Dothan. He sent in the military and they surrounded the entire city and were ready to attack. Elisha's servant got up early in the morning and saw that the city of Dothan was surrounded by the Syrian army and he panicked. He ran to his master and asked, "What are we going to do? There are Syrian soldiers and artillery everywhere." Elisha replied, "There is no need to panic; there is more of us than of them." Then Elisha prayed that the young man's eyes would be opened more widely to see spiritual things and he would then see the invisible host prepared to protect Elisha, his servant, and the city. God answered Elisha's prayer and the young man saw the protective host God had sent.

There are many things that initially appear to be negative, but after a second look through the discerning eyes of faith, they appear positive. Let's pull a few principles from this narrative and analyze a few things which are not what they look like.

Exposition

1. Difficulties Help Develop Us.

(Stumbling Blocks Are Stepping Stones In Disguise.)

(Obstacles Are Golden Opportunities.)

2. The Impossible Gives God A Chance To Work.

(Denial Gives Direction.)

(Failure Is Not Final.)

(Don't Give Up Because You Messed Up.)

3. Testing Gives Us A testimony.

(Your Testimony Will Help Someone Else.)

(Someone Needs To Hear Your Story Because You Don't Look Like
What You Have Been Through.)

Closing Thoughts

It is well to note that Elisha prayed for his servant. Spiritually mature Christians must have patience and pray for those whose faith and spiritual insight are still in the formative stages. Another significant thing in this narrative is that the invisible army had been present all along. Elisha's prayer was not that they arrive, but that their presence be revealed to his servant. Before anyone had known the need, God's protection had been in place. What the servant saw on the second look changed his perspective of the balance of power. The enemy's superiority had only been an illusion. The presence of God always changes the equation. The enemy was not in control. God was in control. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scripture

2nd Kings 6: 8-23

End Note

Probably the Syrian army was preparing for a pre-dawn ambush. This was a standard military tactic of the time. The attack would commence as soon as there was enough sun light for the aggressors to see, while the victims were just waking up groggy, from a long night of sleep.

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