**Digging Deeper Hezekiah Week 4**

Scripture Readings

* 2 Chronicles 31
* 2 Kings 18:1-25
* 2 Chronicles 32:1-5
* Isaiah 9:8-21

We have an entire chapter dedicated to tell us how Hezekiah organized the priests and Levites. He had to do this because they had not been in service to the Lord for the 16 previous years while his father, Ahaz, was king because Ahaz had shut up the doors of the temple.

2 Chronicles 31:2 And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, each according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to minister in the gates of the camp of the Lord and to give thanks and praise.

This organization was done for them to take care of the sacrificial offerings but also to give thanks and praise. They were giving thanks and praise for themselves but also on behalf of the people.

Do you give thanks ang praise to the Lord? Do you do it on behalf of anyone else? Have you ever asked someone to give thanks and praise on behalf of you because you were not in a place where you could do that? Think about those in your life who are going through tough times, is the Lord calling you to give thanks and praise on their behalf? Have you been keeping a gratitude journal and if so, is it helping you be more grateful?

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Hezekiah also tasked the people with bringing their tithes to the Temple. The Levites and the priests who were part of the Levitical tribe did not have any land of their own, they were not given their portion in the Promised Land because the people were to provide for them and the Temple. This was very intentional – the Lord wanted the people to support those who would be leading them. When Hezekiah reinstated these policies, the people gave in abundance.

2 Chronicles 31:4-5 And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the Lord. **5**As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.

The Lord calls us to provide for our worship spaces and leaders. Do you participate in giving financially? The Lord doesn’t need our money to accomplish ministry but He invites us to participate financially so that we can have a part in what He is accomplishing. Are you a generous giver or do you give grudgingly? If you are not sure if you are giving at the level the Lord wants you to give, take some time to pray and seek His wisdom.

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We saw in the teaching this week that this organization of the Levites and priests and reinstating the offerings of the people had a great impact on those in Judah. They had wise leadership in Hezekiah and he charged the religious leaders to do what the Lord called them to do in service at the Temple.

2 Chronicles 31:21 And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.

How do you think Hezekiah’s leadership impacted the faith of the people? Do you think religious leaders impact the faith of those they lead? During this pandemic, many religious leaders have had to make a major shift in how they were able to lead the people by going online or increasing their online presence. This had to happen on the fly – it was not something leaders were prepared to do and it has been very stressful for them. Have you shown appreciation to your pastor and other church leaders? Take a minute and write a prayer of thanksgiving for their leadership. Take it a step further and write them a note of thanks and encouragement – send it to them via text, email or snail mail.

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We saw the impact coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover had on those who came from the Northern Kingdom.

2 Chronicles 31:1 Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, every man to his possession.

However, these were not lasting reforms. The people did not remain faithful to the Lord.

2 Kings 18:6-9 **6**In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods **8**and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. **9**And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city.

Notice what it says in verse 9 – they did it secretly. When we are doing things we know we shouldn’t do, we often do it secretly because we don’t want others to know and we don’t want the Lord to know. Are there things you are doing secretly? Are there areas of sin that the Lord wants to bring into the light? Seek Him, if He reveals something, confess, repent and be obedient to what He is calling you to do or not to do.

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There is nothing we do that is outside of the purview of the Lord.

Psalm 139:7-10 Where shall I go from your Spirit?
    Or where shall I flee from your presence?
**8**If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
    If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
**9**If I take the wings of the morning
    and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
**10**even there your hand shall lead me,
    and your right hand shall hold me.

Do these verses bring comfort or fear? Are you glad the Lord sees everything? The Lord sees everything and loves us in spite of our failures. How does that make you feel?

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Why do you think there were not lasting changes for those in the Northern Kingdom?

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2 Kings 18:12 **12**because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded. They neither listened nor obeyed.

Those in the Northern Kingdom ‘neither listened nor obeyed’. As I said in the teaching, the word LISTEN and SILENT are made up of the same letters – just rearranged. It was impossible for them to obey the Lord because they were not listening to Him. It is not possible to listen if we are always doing all the talking. We MUST spend time in silence before the Lord in order to listen to what He has to say to us and then we MUST be obedient. What is your prayer time like? Do you do all the talking? Spend some time right now – don’t skip this – if you don’t have time right now then come back and do this exercise. Doing this is more important than doing any of the other Digging Deeper material. Spend some time sitting in silence before the Lord. Be open to what He has to say to you. Record what the Lord says. If you find your mind wandering – write down the thoughts that come to mind that are distracting you – i.e. if you are trying to be silent before the Lord and suddenly you remember something you need at the grocery store – write it down so you can refocus on what the Lord is saying. If you need His wisdom or guidance ask, listen, record and obey.

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We saw that the Lord did not allow the destruction of the Northern Kingdom without warning. There were warnings from Isaiah who was prophet in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and warnings from Micah who was a prophet in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Isaiah 9:8-9 The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel; **9**and all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart:

Isaiah 9:13-14 The people did not turn to him who struck them,
nor inquire of the Lord of hosts **14**So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—

Micah 1:5-7 All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? **6**Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. **7**All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return.

Although they had warnings, they did not listen. Have you ever experienced something similar? Have you had someone warn your or share wisdom with you and you chose not to listen? Sometimes the Lord uses those around us to speak truth to us and to lead and guide us. Sometimes the Lord tells us Himself what He wants us to do or not to do. When He does, do you listen and act?

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Has the Lord ever used you to speak truth to someone? How did it go? How was it received?

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I will share an example from my own life. I was participating in a wedding ceremony for a couple and for about a month, the Lord put it on my heart to talk to them about living together and having sex outside of marriage. I did not want to have this conversation. I was listening to what the Lord was saying but I was not acting. The promptings from the Lord became relentless. I was waking up in the middle of the night thinking about it. I knew the Lord wanted me to have the conversation but I didn’t want to – I was worried about how they would react and I didn’t want to ruin my relationship with them. In my prayer time the Lord was giving me such a heart for them. He made it very clear to me that if I loved them, I needed to speak truth to them. I even sought the advice of a spiritual leader and was told NOT to have the conversation that it would be hurtful and offensive but the Lord kept pressing in on me. I finally decided to have the conversation. It was not easy and I was very nervous. I told them that the Lord had been putting it on my heart for a while and I couldn’t ignore it anymore. I told them that as believers, we know that they Lord created sex for marriage and sex outside of marriage was not part of His plan. I told them I was not judging them but loving them. They didn’t need to say anything, I just wanted to ask them that if they were having sex outside of marriage if they would pray about abstaining until the wedding as a way of honoring what they were asking the Lord to bless. I wasn’t sure how the conversation went but had such peace afterwards. I heard from both of them later that day – one of them said the Lord had been putting it on her heart and I received an email from him thanking me for loving them enough to have the conversation.

Please know that I am not advocating judging others for how they are living their lives. We are not the sin police. But we are called to love others and to love them well. IF the Lord calls you to have a difficult conversation, pray about it and be willing to be obedient. If you aren’t sure if it is you or the Lord who wants the conversation to happen pray about it. Check your motives. If your motive is ANYTHING other than love for the person, I would pray about whether or not your motives are pure.

Hezekiah allowed fear to trump his faith. The Lord had been so faithful to Hezekiah and yet when Assyrian army had more and more success conquering areas around him, Hezekiah decided to first make an alliance with Egypt and then tried to make things right with the king of Assyria by paying him a huge amount of gold and silver. It is easy for us to become fearful when we are focusing on our circumstances and not on the Lord.

Is there an area of your life where you are operating out of fear vs. faith? Is it in your finances, your health, your relationships, your job, etc.?

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In humbling himself before the king of Assyria, Hezekiah is caving to the pressure to protect the people in Judah. Caving into pressure is something we can all fall prey to if we are allowing fear to be our guide rather than our faith. Do you cave to the pressure of others? Do you find yourself compromising what you would normally do or not do if others around you are giving in? Do you find it hard to stand up when you are afraid or if you have much to lose?

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Hezekiah ended up paying a hefty price in gold and silver in order to appease the king. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were willing to do anything to get out of it? Would you change your mind if it meant sparing the lives of your family and friends?

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Our desire to protect others can be a very strong one and it is not necessarily wrong to want to protect others. However, how we go about protecting them and what we are willing to do can be problematic. We are called to love others and if you look at the way Jesus loved people, He loved them well. He was willing to point out how their sin was harming them in a loving way and offered them grace. One of the best examples of this is in the story of the woman at the well.

John 4:7-26 **7**A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” **8**(For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) **9**The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) **10**Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” **11**The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? **12**Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” **13**Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14**but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.[ The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” **15**The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” **16**Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” **17**The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; **18**for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” **19**The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. **20**Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” **21**Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **22**You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23**But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **24**God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” **25**The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” **26**Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

Jesus acknowledged that she had had several husbands and the man she was with was not actually her husband. He then told her of the living water he had to offer. As women of faith, we need to love others well. Pray about who the Lord wants you to show love to today and then do it. It might be a word of encouragement, it might be a listening ear, it might be just checking in on someone or it might be sharing your faith with someone. Pray and record who the Lord wants you to reach out to and what He wants you to do. Then make a plan to be obedient and follow through. Love someone well today in the name of Jesus!

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