

Sermon Series: Faith is Not a Spectator Sport: Get in the Game

Sermon Title: The Season We Lost and Won

Biblical Passage: 1 Samuel 7:3-12

Passage Background and Summary

Prior to the passage for today, the people of Israel have been in conflict with the Philistines and have recently suffered a loss. The Ark of the Covenant is now in the hands of the Philistines. Their life in the Promised Land isn't going as planned. Samuel comes to the people with a message of returning back to God. They are to "put away" foreign gods and idols (vv. 3-4). Samuel then gathers them all together at Mizpah where he'll pray. Together the people fast and repent (vv. 5-6). The Philistines hear of this and prepare to go up against them. They beckon Samuel to "cry out" to God for them, and he does (vv. 8-9). The Philistines come to attack as Samuel is preparing an offering, but "the Lord thundered with a mighty voice" and they are scattered (v. 10). The people of Israel defeat the Philistines, and Samuel sets a stone and names the place Ebenezer, "for he said, "Thus far the Lord has helped us"" (vv. 11-12).

Sermon Points

Sometimes life takes us through what feels like an entire season of losing. The people in the text are going through a long and difficult season of loss. Even the Ark of the Covenant had been captured and dragged from place to place. They've come out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the Promised Land, but those promises are forgotten when you're thick in the battle and it feels like your adversaries are getting the best of you. You wonder, has God forgotten about us? It is easy to forget about God in the midst of the battle, and we panic. We have been in a pandemic and a season of loss, and we find ourselves saying, "Lord help!" The people of Israel cried out in the midst of a pandemic, "Save us from the Philistines." Pastor Warnock came to tell those who may feel like they're going through a season of loss, that you can win.

YOU CAN WIN, EVEN IN A SEASON OF LOSS, IF YOU:

Prepare: They drew water, poured it out to the Lord, and fasted. They were preparing their heads, hearts, and hands to serve God and be vessels of God's glory and power. Are you ready? Have you prepared? They were in a moment of revival and repentance. You have to prepare to get in the game.

Pray: They asked Samuel to cry out for them, and they began to cry out to the Lord. In this moment, we need God to save us from that which could destroy us. Prayer is how we communicate with God. Sometimes prayer is just a few words, "Lord, have mercy on me," or one word, "Jesus." If you cry out, God will show up and deliver. Trouble don't last always, and it will come to pass.

Pause: There comes a moment when the best thing to do is pause. After you pray, you have to be quiet until God begins to speak with you. There was a thundercloud, and they found themselves pursuing those who had been pursuing them. Sometimes we just have to be quiet and let God thunder. Sometimes you have to just be still and watch God send a thundercloud.

The hang hesitation is one of the most successful moves in basketball. It's when the skilled basketball player jumps on both feet and then just hangs for a while. The power is not in the movement, the power is in the pause. When your enemies, go left, God goes right. When your enemy closes the door, God opens the door.

Pursue: Pastor Warnock and his siblings use to play checkers. One day, Pastor Warnock was able to get one of his pieces to the other side of the board. When you get one piece to the other side of the board, they have to king you. If they king you, you can move to one corner. Pastor Warnock learned when he was 6 years old that as long as you got a king in your corner, you're still in the game. If King Jesus is in your corner, no devil in hell can stop you. If you have a king in your corner, you're still in the game. God will bring you out. If God did it back then, God will do it again today.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever experienced a season of loss where you wondered where God was? What did you do?
2. How do you prepare for an encounter with God?
3. What thing(s) do you need to repent of?
4. In what situation have you requested that someone pray on your behalf?
5. What are some things you can do to pursue God?
6. Reflect on a time when God delivered you from a loss.