

A Strong Promise

Building Core Strength

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Bible Text: Genesis 49:1-12

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So all this year we have been looking at various aspects of building core strength. We have been asking: What does it mean to be a person and to be a church that ultimately is strong? And now we are coming down to the last few Sundays, finishing off the year we want to organize our Christmas series around the theme of quiet strength.

The story of the birth of our Savior isn't loud. It is not flashy. It is not flamboyant. It was a silent night. It was holy night. But it was also simultaneously strong. And that is part of what God wants us to be come, people who possess a quiet strength.

In light of that I have been reflecting this week on a question. How reliable are my words, my commitments and my promises? After all, Jesus teaches in Matthew that true righteousness involves our words, our commitments and our promises. He says that our yes is supposed to mean yes and our no is supposed to mean no. But maybe your evaluation is somewhat similar to mine.

I can think of many times when I have made commitments. I have made promises and I have kept them. I can also think of things or opportunities where I intended to do something. I said I was going to do something and yet I didn't actually do it. Is anybody else there? Am I the only one? I don't think so. Whether I was incapable, unwilling or I just simply forgot, it doesn't matter. My yes wasn't always yes and my no wasn't always no. In thinking about this and my experience helps me in a number of ways. First it helps me remember that when someone breaks a commitment to me it reminds me that they are in good company, because I have been guilty of that time and time again. And I don't have to be frustrated or angry because there are numerous occasions where I have done the exact same thing. In other words, I am freely ready to live in the grace of Jesus and I am able to extend that grace to others.

But more importantly than that, it helps me appreciate, it helps me love and give allegiance to the one whose words never fail and always come to fulfillment. You see God's promises and God's Word, they will not return void. They will not leave us disappointed and they will not leave us wondering whether the words are good. To say it another way, God makes strong promises, because his promises will always be kept.

So with that in mind I invite you to turn to Genesis 49 this morning and look at a passage that is going to illustrate that. It is on page 39 in the front section of your Bibles. This passage explains one of the strong promises that you and I can rely on and it also encourages us to develop our allegiance in a particular direction. So before I actually read the text, I want to provide a little bit of a background.

So we are in the book of Genesis and the book of Genesis begins with teaching about creation and the fall of man into sin, but shortly thereafter we learn about a man named Abraham. God promises Abraham land, seed in the form of descendants and blessing despite the fact that Sarah his wife is barren, God allows her to give birth to Isaac. Isaac has two sons, but God chooses Jacob as a son of promise as opposed to his older brother Esau. So the promises originally given to Abraham flow to Isaac and then to Jacob. And then Jacob's 12 sons then become the 12 tribes of Israel so that by the time we get to Genesis 49 Joseph—many of you know the story of Joseph—Jacob's favorite son has been sold into slavery. But he has ascended to the second in command in Egypt. And there is famine and the famine in Israel is also so severe that they move under Joseph down into Egypt under his protection and then 17 years pass and the time of Jacob's death is near. So Jacob dies in Egypt.

In 17 years things have turned for the better in many ways. There are more people, descendants. There is a picture of blessing to some degree. But they are not in the land God has promised and God's promises have yet to be fulfilled. But before Jacob dies, before he passes away under the direction of God he foretells the future of each son and then each tribe. This is not just a division of family inheritance. It was a prophecy about the future of the world. It was a prophecy regarding the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that have yet to be fulfilled.

Let's read Genesis 49:1-12. Please follow along with me. Genesis 49.

Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come. Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob; And listen to Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it — he went up to my couch.

"Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk."¹

Now our focus is going to localize around verses eight through 12, the strong promise concerning Judah. It is surprising, though, that Judah gets the praise, because he is son number four. He is the fourth son and something happened to Reuben, Simeon and Levi, the first three sons, that ultimately disqualified them. Reuben, as you see in the text, is disqualified because of his pride and his passion manifested in his reckless sexual sin against this own family. We read that here and you read that in Genesis 35:22.

So the irony is that not letting Reuben's descendant's fill the earth and prosper is actually a blessing to the world. Passing over Reuben is actually a blessing to the world.

And then you see Simeon and Levi, the second and third born of Jacob. They are also disqualified because of unjust violence. You read about that in Genesis 34. Ironically, again, not allowing their descendants to prosper would be a blessing to the world as well.

But then we come to Judah and Judah, despite having a fair bit of challenges himself he becomes the son of blessing, not because he is so wonderful, because he is not, but because God has made a choice.

So there might be a temptation at this point to think that this sermon is just simply going to be about some old history, some information and have no practical value to our lives. When, in fact, God makes a strong promise in this passage of the tribe of Judah that is in force today. For Judah himself is not the sole subject of the promise. It is his descendants. And the most significant are David and more importantly Jesus Christ.

Revelation 5:5 describes the time when this prediction will ultimately be fulfilled. It reads:

"...and one of the elders *said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.'"²

So we look at that. We look at the prediction of Judah and what we are ultimately going to see is the promise of a preeminent one who brings blessing.

¹ Genesis 49:1-12.

² Revelation 5:5.

So as we get into it we see in Genesis 49:8-12 God promises the establishment of a preeminent one who brings blessing. Look at the text. It says:

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you."³

The thrust of verse nine it sets the tone for Jacob's prophecy about Judah and his descendants. Judah rises to the top. All his brothers are going to praise him. The great line of kings began with David who was from the line of Judah. All of the other tribes praised King David. It was also through the line of Judah through which Jesus was born, the ultimate great and mighty king who receives praise. And he will reign on the throne of David forever and his kingdom is one of peace and justice.

But not only do the brothers understand what is going on, but it also says that in addition to the brothers recognizing his supremacy, but his own enemies will not escape his reach. Once again we see shadows of this in the life of David. He was a warrior king. He conquered everyone around him. But ultimate fulfillment by the king Jesus on his return is yet to come.

The picture given in Revelation five which I read is praise to the one, the only one who is qualified to open the scroll. And you see excitement enter the scene as Jesus, the lion from the tribe of Judah is able to perform the task that no one else could do. Part of that task involves pouring out his judgment on the enemies of the gospel. And as you read the text in Genesis 49 it may be that the language your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies, it might evoke a picture of an enemy turning his back to you. It is like you are so powerful, I am not even going to mess with you. I am going to run away. And yet you are able to reach out and grab him by the nape of the neck and he cannot escape.

Just imagine the power it takes for someone to run away from you and the power it takes that they can't get away from you. That is how the Bible describes the reign of Christ. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord. Either people are going to do that voluntarily or they will do so under the power and control of the great and mighty king. The issue is not who will submit, but how. How will submission occur?

So brother or enemy, Judah reigns supreme. That is what this text teaches and preeminently, especially in the person of Jesus Christ.

So this idea of supremacy, this idea of preeminence, it is carried through the rest of the verses in metaphors of the lion as the king of all beasts or a king or a chief who is riding on a donkey which was common transport for a king. And you think about that. You think about the context of this passage and what a great passage to study at Christmas time. What a way to being our serving at Christmas, to think back of the strong promises given in Genesis 49, of a tribe that ultimately produce David and more importantly Jesus. Judah is the preeminent tribe and Jesus is the preeminent one from the preeminent tribe.

³ Genesis 49:8.

So let's pause for a minute and just talk about application, something worthy of reflection as we work our way through the text. The main application point I really want everybody to walk away from here today is allegiance, ok? Allegiance. Who has our allegiance? At the level of everyday life, the everyday level of life, not if someone comes and says, "Hey, who are you give your allegiance to?" I am talking about the way that we live every day. Who has our allegiance?

Often time that is found mostly in the answer to that question is: You know, who is going to give me what I want? I will align myself, I will have allegiance to whoever gives me what I want. And even as we read Genesis 49 we see that God chooses to put his blessing around a certain people, a certain person. And if a person was interested in blessing, then he or she needed to align themselves with the one who God decided to bless. Through Abraham the whole world is going to be blessed.

So in order to dig into the details of this passage we are going to look for three characteristics of God's preeminent one that demands our allegiance. So each of these characteristics relate to the tribe of Judah as a whole, but it is in Jesus that they find their ultimate expression and ultimate fulfillment. So my focus in all of the points will rest on how these characteristics point to Jesus, the one who fulfills them.

So the allegiance that we discuss this morning it is not simply allegiance to a tribe that we can identify, but to a person from the tribe who is in heaven having accomplished all his work and is awaiting the time for his second coming. So the first characteristic is his unassailable strength in righteousness.

Look at verse nine in the text.

"Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?"⁴

That is a healthy fear. Don't poke a lion when they are sleeping. So there is a fear. There is a healthy fear here of Judah. In context, this refers to Judah's strength and his leadership over his brothers. As you read through Genesis, there are moments when one of the brothers needs to lead. They are going to be doing all kinds of things and 12 men gathered together trying to do something. They are not going to get very far unless one of them says, "Ok, I am going to take the lead."

One of the clearest examples of Judah's leadership is with his brother Joseph. You remember Joseph he had lots of dreams. He was a dreamer. And he described his own prophecy. It involved his brothers bowing down to him. A great family discussion, by the way. You guys are going to bow down to me. Irritated and bitter the brothers. I mean, how would you respond to that? You are going to bow down to me. You would be a little irritated and bitter probably as well, but the brothers took it for the ... they devised their own scheme. They are going to kill Joseph. This was so insulting they were going to kill

⁴ Genesis 49:9.

him and show that he had been torn to pieces. He was going to become the prey. Joseph was going to be the prey. You see that in Genesis 37 and 44.

But in that moment Judah comes to the forefront. They are going to kill Joseph, but he leads his brothers to sell Joseph. I mean, it is not great, but it is better than being killed and so Judah provides some leadership to sell Joseph into slavery and cover up their deeds by explaining that Joseph was killed by an animal. So Judah leads his brothers in unrighteousness. He is coming to the forefront and God ultimately decides to teach Judah a lesson by the hands of his daughter-in-law. And it is here that Judah realizes his own righteousness, his own unrighteousness and he repents. And next time at the end of the story of Joseph we find Judah willing to give his own life for his father's son instead of putting his father's favorite son in harm's way. Judah became strong in righteousness, like a lion.

This picture of strength is found in David, the man after God's own heart. But more importantly we find this, the picture of strength, quiet strength in Jesus Christ who completely redefines righteousness and actually lives it out.

Think about righteousness where you pray for those who persecute you. Think about Jesus on the cross. When you love your enemies and actually do good for them think of Christ dying for sinners, for his enemies. Where your word, righteousness means your word is more reliable than cash money in your hand. It is a certainty. It is something you know for sure. Or righteousness that you not only avoid murder, but you avoid hating someone in your heart. Righteousness where you are not to be showing, but rather live godly and quietly. Think of Jesus in front of Pontius Pilate. Or righteousness is when you lean into God, when you trust him and you find security in your relationship with him as opposed to worry and finding security in material possessions.

Think of Jesus praying at the garden. Jesus is strong in righteousness. He embodies the strength of a lion. He is God's chosen one.

So let's come back to our application of allegiance. We tend to align ourselves to those who help us get what we want. In some cases we want the wrong things. We tend to align ourselves with things we want like entertainment. We will align ourselves to things that give us entertainment. So right away you think of sports teams or sports figures. I myself I am a Vikings fan. And before you boo and yell and throw Bibles at me, I grew up being a Vikings fan, ok? And regardless of how terrible they are I will always be a Vikings fan whether they win or not. You know, if they win, though, I enjoy that. And if they lose, well life goes on. Well, life goes on a lot.

But all kidding aside, some people are more faithful to their favorite sports teams or basketball team or football team than they are to Jesus, the one who is strong in righteousness.

A similar point could be said about some TV shows. Some folks could not find it in themselves to attend church every week, but faithfully, maybe once a month. But when it

comes to their favorite TV show they do not miss it ever. And Facebook lights the next day on who got kicked off the island or who got eliminated from the race or who they think is going to win.

Speculation abounds. And do you know what? Entertainment is fine to a point. But when there is more evidence of allegiance to your favorite TV show or entertainment than to Christ, something is bad wrong. We find this in video games or app games.

I heard a statistic that the average gamer is a 35 year old male. So this is not just for the teenagers in the room. Average gamer 35 year old male. Some people know far more about video games than they do about Jesus. That is the bottom line on culture. Their allegiance to entertainment leads them to play games for hours on end not thinking of more productive ways to use their time.

How about something else if you are not a gamer? How about rest or leisure? We attach ourselves to whatever we think is going to give us leisure. We want to do the things in our job that we like, that are going to be easy. We want... that we are good at. We want to work hard, do a good job eight hours, you know, a day, and be done, go home and relax, because we did the things that we liked and were good at. This is also why our parenting is not about raising our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Our allegiance is to rest and leisure. Raising your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord has very little to do with rest and leisure.

Our allegiance, though, is to rest and leisure. And what then happens to us as parents is we don't want to deal with our children. We want to find the quickest, the easiest and the simplest way to get back to relaxing.

Friends, what about our allegiance to Jesus? Because he is God's chosen righteous one. The blessings associated with being aligned to him are a changed heart and a changed life. Righteousness teaches you how to deal with people who hurt you. You do good for them and you pray for them. Righteousness teaches you how to deal with challenging circumstances. Put your trust in the Lord and lean into him and find comfort in the days of grief. It is kind of like a sick child or a child who gets woken by a storm and they are scared or they are not feeling good. They run to their parents' bedroom looking for solace and comfort. True righteousness is running to your Father saying, "I need you for solace and comfort because I am afraid and I am hurt and you are my Father." That is righteousness.

Righteousness teaches how to love people when you feel like hating them. Righteousness teaches you how to focus on keeping your word rather than focusing on everybody else has kept theirs or not.

God attached his blessing onto his son Jesus who is strong in righteousness. It is through allegiance to Jesus that we will experience the blessings that righteousness has to offer.

So a second characteristic of God's preeminent one is that his eternal rule over all people. Look at verse 10. It says:

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes."⁵

That is a tricky translation. It can also be translated, "Until he comes to whom it, the scepter, belongs." Or, "Until tribute to him comes." It is a difficult phrase. But the next phrase says:

"And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."⁶

The nations. This passage explains that another characteristic of the tribe of Judah is that they are given the right to rule and it will never depart from them. In fact, the right to rule is given until Shiloh comes or until he comes to whom it belongs or until tribute to him comes. The point here regardless of that exact phrasing is that ongoing right to rule climaxes in something of someone in whom all the obedience of all the nations will be manifested.

This finds its fulfillment in the person of Jesus who will reign on the throne of David forever. This kingdom is not going away. It is not changing. It is not like another king is going come and take it. It is not two terms and then you are done. This one lasts forever.

Did you notice in the text that there were no votes, no elections, on consultations? God decided it and it doesn't matter what anyone thinks. Nor does it matter what opposition may arise. God has deemed it so. And the lineage will subdue all rebellion one way or another so that the obedience of all people will be established.

As we return to the person of Christ, we understand that this day has not yet come. In fact, from the day of his ascension people have been asking: When is his return? When is he going to come back? When is he going to complete all that he promised?

I want to show you a text that kind of puts that in context. If you will, turn to 2 Peter 3:9. That is on page 184. But keep your finger back in Genesis. We may be back. So 2 Peter 3:9, page 184. 2 Peter 3:9-12 states that:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening

⁵ Genesis 49:10.

⁶ Ibid.

the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.⁷

Jesus has not yet exercised his absolute rule and authority because once he does, there is no going back. Everything is dissolved. And since his heart is full of righteousness, he is patient, drawing men and women to himself. It maybe that you are here this morning because it is Christmas time and you figured it was best to come to church. Thank you for coming. Thank you for being here. This passage we are studying today is so important, because it helps you see that you have a problem. Your allegiance has been to yourself for the things, but all of those things will one day be destroyed in a flash, in a moment. God's chosen one will rule with absolute power and authority and those who are aligned to him will experience his blessing. And those who aren't will experience his wrath.

Scripture explains how to align yourself to Christ. It explains that if you confess with your sin and you believe in your heart in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, that you will be saved. It is not merely a belief in a person like Abraham Lincoln, but it is a trusting. It is a reliance on that this is the only way to deal with your sin problem and align yourself with Christ.

Now, secondly, this has a lot to say to us as believers with respect to our allegiance, but we are aligning ourselves to. I mentioned earlier that we tend to align ourselves to things that entertain us, that give us rest as opposed to righteousness. On this point I would like to consider allegiance from a little different angle. Few of us really enjoy criticism. Is that true? Who is like, "Boy, I hope I get criticized today. I hope somebody really gives it to me good." I don't think that we just go into our day like that praying for criticism. So what do we respond to that? We tend to align ourselves to people who give us praise. Who really likes us? We really like them. We even align ourselves to the things that will help us avoid critique. In other words, we struggle with the fear of man on one hand, but we also clamor for the praise of man on the other.

This is one reason we struggle in our marriages. It is one of the reasons we struggle in our friendships. It is one of the reasons that we struggle with loneliness. We are bound by fear of other people. Or, to say it another way, we are aligned with them. It impacts the decisions we make, the clothes we wear and the way we use our voice. What Jesus says is align yourself to him and then you will be able to love others freely because you are fully loved by God. You don't have to clamor after what they think of you. Keep his commandments, because you are more concerned about doing what is right in his eyes than doing what concerns someone else. You can be secure because Jesus is the one who confronts you and comforts you when you are in trouble. In other words, when we have more allegiance and devotion to people other than Christ, we miss out on the blessing that God has for us. We believe the deception that people we esteem and align ourselves with will bring us some sort of exaltation, some sort of satisfaction in some way. But as we look at the text in Peter we realize that not any of that earthly exaltation will last. Only

⁷ 2 Peter 3:9-13.

that allegiance connected to God's chosen ruling one will result in ultimate exaltation, satisfaction.

So a final point in the passage is God's preeminent one, his abundant prosperity. He ties his foal in verse 11.

He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk.⁸

So the language here is that of agriculture. Agriculture comes to mind. It is a picture of a vast vineyard with fruit to spare. Really difficult question. What happens when you tie animals to food? They eat it, right? You tie an animal to food they are going to ... they are not just going to look at it and be like, huh, that is interesting. They are going to consume it. They are going to eat it. It is going to be gone. And you are like, "Where did my food go?"

Only the most prosperous would have the luxury of tying their donkey to a grape vine, because the donkey is going to eat the grapes. The owner would have now worry of his harvest being consumed. That means that there was fruit everywhere, vast vineyards. His reign would be so prosperous that even wine would be considered like water, so plentiful to wash your garments.

That is great if everybody just wore red, but the idea is prosperity. It is everywhere. This prosperity is so rich and plentiful that his eyes are dark like grapes. I mean, the metaphor here is just layers upon layers of things are good and prosperous. They have colored his eyes. His teeth shine white from the milk that is also so prevalent on his property. It is prosperity on steroids. It is amazing.

Gods' favor and grace being upon Judah's descendants and his land is extremely prosperous.

Throughout the nation of Israel there has been hints, there has been shadows, there has been foretelling of this, a taste, a sampling. David and his son Solomon enjoyed the vast empire of prosperity and Solomon's reign was mostly peaceful and there was praise. But, once again, there is only in the person of Jesus that this finds ultimate expression.

Listen to ... just let's soak this in, Revelation 5:11-14 and just here is a taste of what is to come. Revelation 5:11. Just listen. Just soak this in.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which

⁸ Genesis 49:11-12.

is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.⁹

It is here where Jesus, the only one worthy to open the scroll is praised. Every known creature in heaven and earth. His kingdom is characterized by blessing, honor, glory and dominion forever, a picture of prosperity.

Earlier in verse nine the song began by acknowledging that Jesus bought with his own blood people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Now there are many blessings of righteousness of dealing with our world, of handling our personal relationships that Jesus offers right now. But there remains a day coming when the full and final picture of this is ultimately fulfilled when the Lamb will lie down with the lion signifying peace and will eat of the tree of life where fruit is abundant where pain, sickness, mourning will be swept away by the abundant prosperity and provision of the kingdom of Jesus. So our task is to align ourselves to him.

As I have thought through this passage this week I have been encouraged not to align myself to things that will simply entertain me, things that will simply give me leisure or give me praise, but to align myself to the wonderful king Jesus, a descendant of Judah who is like a lion in righteousness, whose rule lasts forever and whose kingdom of prosperity is beyond description.

Before we end, I have one more practical issue to discuss. What does it mean to give your allegiance to Jesus? What does that look like? I suppose we could answer that question a number of ways, but here are four thoughts.

First, it means we find our joy and satisfaction in Jesus. Jesus is our motivating force for why we do what we do and how we do what we do. If we are working passionately for Christ, then others may not like us, may not treat us with kindness that we hoped for. But we can remain joyful and satisfied that we live for the one who died for us.

Alliance to Jesus also means that we serve with passion. You know, you think of the living nativity beginning Friday. Christmas for everyone distribution on Saturday, the living nativity musical next week. You know, many of you teach on a weekly basis either in the children's ministries or you serve in the community ministries or in the youth ministry, the bottom line is that those who are aligned with Jesus serve Jesus with passion. It is not just the class. It is not just the next car, the next family or the next team. It is also that Jesus is able to see beyond the externals to the heart. So pray and ask the Lord would help you align yourself in Jesus in the way you serve passionately, because it is for Jesus.

⁹ Revelation 5:11-14.

Thirdly, allegiance with Jesus means we reevaluate our current and past allegiances, carve out time to focus on evaluation of your life, of your family and which direction you are heading. You know, the calendar has flipped to December. Christmas is right around the corner and pretty soon 2013 is what we are going to be talking about. Carve out some time to think about how your allegiance has been displayed this year and what areas you want to realign and make Jesus the preeminent one.

You know, fourth and lastly, aligning ourselves to Jesus, having our allegiance to him means we think about him constantly. The disciplines of reading and prayer are vital to growth. But so is the concept of thinking about Jesus, on meditating on who he is, dwelling on his character and his goodness, his promises and his position. It is good for your soul. It reorients your day around the purposes that God would have for you.

Friends, when God makes promises they are strong. No doubt, no worries. It will be fulfilled. So ensure that your allegiance is the one from the words of the song forever reign. There is good when there is nothing good in me. There is love on display for all the world to see. There is light when the darkness closes in. There is peace when our fear is crippling. It is true even in our wanderings. There is joy, there is life and it is more than our words could ever tell. So let's run into his arms because he is God and all else I am letting go.

That, my friends, is quiet strength.